

THE “GOVERNMENTAL” BETRAYAL OF THE SOVEREIGN:
A LEGAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY ON NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL
INEQUALITY AND NARRATIVE SUBJECTIVIZATION AMONG
THE MIGRANTS OF SULTANBEYLİ

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Thesis Abstract

Şamil Can “The ‘Governmental’ Betrayal of the Sovereign:
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Subjectivization among the Migrants of Sultanbeyli”

This anthropological study explores *neoliberalism* as a concrete way of “conducting” life, *rather than* a macro-level flux of institutional transformations, or an inaddressable nebula of currently re-organizing global phenomena. Such *macro*-transformations depend on a wide range of *micro*-shifts in the concrete daily techniques, practices and means of “survival” which individuals are equipped with in articulating peculiar life-courses. I locate the historical crystallization of such shifts in changes among *repertoires* of these daily techniques, practices and means of survival, which reflects differing configurations of the Foucauldian triad of *sovereignty—discipline—governmentality*. On the other hand, I attribute the stakes for “survival” or articulation of “life” to the availability of technologies of *narrative subjectivization*, which means being “able” to set forth a subjective position in social relations such that it can be articulated as *legitimate* and *meaningful*. My research in Sultanbeyli unearths how the current governmental economy of informality is narratively articulated in the form of a position for conducting one’s own conducts *against* and *in the face of* liminal *openings* like social stratification, racial discrimination, and segregation. This “position” is filled in by a concurrent apology for *both* the governmental economy of informality, *and* “legitimizing” discourses of *equalizing* historical differences. Nevertheless, this dual position of subjecthood breaks down in moments of addressing the material configurations of social differences. The *legitimacy* and *meaning* of narratives are haunted by an “unreal” register of “real differences” crystallizing in a *trace* that *cannot* be addressed properly and is hence *looped out*. In that regard, the *success* of the governmental economy of informality depends on a *narratively displaced failure* in addressing this trace. But this precarious displacement leaves the narratively articulated *position* of subjecthood in havoc: tormented under the grip of an inalienable “trace” to be displaced, it is bound to *address* it in order to neutralize and equalize it. This ineluctable circle is both the wound and the cure, leaving the social field *open* for articulating *alternative* life-courses for *alternative* means of survival amidst neoliberalism.

Tez Özeti

Şamil Can “Egemen’in ‘Yönetimsel’ İfşası:
Sultanbeyli Göçmenleri Arasında Neoliberal Toplumsal Eşitsizlik ve Anlatısal
Özneleşme Süreci Üzerine Yasal-Antropolojik bir Araştırma”

Bu antropolojik çalışma *neoliberalizmi* bir makro-kurumsal dönüşümler silsilesi veya hâlihazırda yeniden örgütlenen bir dizi küresel görüngünün oluşturduğu karmaşık bir nebula olarak *değil*, somut bir “hayatı idare etme” kipi olarak inceliyor. *Makro-*dönüşümler, bireylerin hayatlarını idare etmek başvurdukları somut gündelik “hayatta kalma” tekniklerinde, pratiklerinde ve araçlarında meydana gelen geniş çaplı *mikro-*değişimlere bağlıdır. Bu değişimlerin tarihsel oluşumlarını Foucault’nun *egemenlik—disiplin—yönetimsellik* üçlüsünün muhtelif konfigürasyonlarını yansıtan gündelik teknik, pratik ve araç repertuarlarında meydana gelen değişimlerde konumlandırıyorum. Öte yandan kişilerin “hayatta kalma” veya “hayatı artiküle etme” ihtimallerini, sosyal ilişkileri içerisinde *anlamli ve meşru* bir şekilde artiküle edilebilecek öznel bir konum ortaya koyma kabiliyeti anlamına gelen *anlatısal özneleşme* teknolojilerinin mevcudiyetine bağlıyorum. Sultanbeyli’deki araştırmam, mevcut yönetimsel gayrı-resmiyet ekonomisinin, kişilerin edimlerini sosyal tabakalaşma, ırk ayrımcılığı ve mekansal dışlama gibi *liminal* çatlaklar *karşısında* dahi idame ettirebilecekleri bir konum suretinde anlatısal olarak artiküle edildiğini gösteriyor. Bu “konum” ise *hem* mevcut yönetimsel gayrı-resmiyet ekonomisini, *hem de* tarihsel farklılıkları *eşitleyen/sıfırlayan* meşrulaştırıcı söylemleri koruyan bir savunmacı bir tavır ile doldurulur. Ne var ki, bu ikili öznelik konumu sosyal farklılıkların maddi konfigürasyonlarını göz önüne almak zorunda kaldığında kırılır. Anlatıların *meşruiyeti ve anlamlılığı* gereğince göz önüne *alınamayan* bir *iz* ile somutlaşan “gerçek farkların” oluşturduğu “gerçek-dışı” bir düzlemin tesiri altında kalır. Bu anlamda yönetimsel gayrı-resmiyet ekonomisinin *başarısı*, bu izi göz önüne almaktaki *başarısızlığın anlatısal olarak anlamsızlaştırılmasına* bağlıdır. Ama bu hassas anlamsızlaştırma anlatısal olarak artiküle edilen öznelik *konumunu* boşluğa düşürür: anlamsızlaştırılması gereken bu “iz” yüzünden çektiği işkencelere rağmen onu etkisizleştirebilmek için onu *göz önüne almaya* mahkumdur. Bu kaçınılmaz döngü hem yara, hem de ilaçtır: *alternatif* hayatta kalma araçları için *alternatif* hayatı idame biçimleri yaratacak şekilde sosyal alanı *açık* bırakır.

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to my mother, father and sister in Ankara. I owe to them much more than they know. I wish to thank to my exceptional Jury members (again) for the “other” (much more “friendly”) sense of support they provided me in every moment of difficulty to an unbelievable extent, demonstrating their most intimate feelings and providing most constructive insights. I deeply regret not being able to thank my dear friends and everyone in my life to whom I owe various parts and pieces of the courage, dare and strength to think and to write.

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*To my most Dear
Yasemin*

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PREFACE

“THE DAY THAT NEVER COMES”²

Interest reipublicae ut qualibet re sua bene utatur³

Roman Law Maxim

GOVERN — Middle English (14th century), from Anglo-French «g o v e r n e r»; from Latin «g u b e r n a r e» to steer, govern; from Greek «k y b e r n o» (*κυβερνάω*); 1 a: to exercise *continuous sovereign authority* over, especially: to control and direct the making and administration of policy in; b: to rule *without sovereign power* and usually *without having the authority* to determine basic policy; 2 a: *manipulate*; b: to control the speed of (as a machine) especially by *automatic* means; 3 a: to control, *direct*, or strongly influence the actions and *conduct* of; b: to exert a determining or guiding influence in or over; c: to hold in check: *restrain*; 4: to require (a word) to be in a certain case; 5: to serve as a precedent or deciding principle for.

Webster's Dictionary

This thesis is about the *temporal aporias* of social existence that haunt the lives of inhabitants of “slums” within the suffocating parameters of the current neoliberal epoch. Yet it is *even more* about the *subjectural means of survival* they (are forced to) acquire in order to articulate individual life-courses (“livelihood”⁴). I locate these “subjectural means” basically in the narrative technologies (migrant) slum-inhabitants articulate for *governing* a “life in havoc” and *emplotting* it as a meaningful and legitimate story. Making a place of one’s own in the uncanny vast space of the urban landscape required the migrants to become virt(u)ous riders of the “storms of survival” in the city. The working hypothesis that underlines this study is that there

² The debut single/song from Metallica’s recent album, *Death Magnetic* (2008).

³ “It concerns the commonwealth that every one uses his property properly”; see Bouvier (1856).

⁴ “Livelihood — Alteration of Middle English *livelode*, course of life, from Old English *līflād*, from *līf* + *lād* course, 15th century, 1: means of support or subsistence; 2 (obsolete): the quality or state of being lively” (Webster’s Dictionary).

is a Machiavellian *dispositif*⁵ of power, which, as I argue, postulates a specific historical cosmology through specific discursive and/or disciplinary practices along with the gradual problematization of “life” in the aftermath of the 17th century (Foucault 1990, Foucault 2003, Foucault 2007). In that “new” cosmology the *world* is construed as a fierce space with a disjointed temporality, run by the whims of chance — by what Machiavelli had called *fortuna*. *Fortuna* is to be *mastered* in “conditional” terms and by the “technical” skill for *knowing* “what to do”, “when to do it” and “how to do it” — *virtu* (Machiavelli 2000).

Historically conditioned by the bitter experiences of massive *dislocation* by farmers, migrants, serfs and the like in the last four centuries around the globe, “urbanization” has been the ultimate motor of this historical-cosmological *dispositif*. The workers’ experience of the urban landscape has been deeply permeated by their problematization of the “city” as a vast, inner-expanding, violent, whimsical and irregular space that can’t be mastered *absolutely* as a cosmological integral totality for “dwelling”. In that regard, this problematization discursively and practically produced a concurrent problematization of a fleeting temporality, the “grasping” of which requires a non-foundational and ephemeral technical skill to “ride” the whims

⁵ “What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely. Thirdly, I understand by the term “apparatus” a sort of—shall we say—formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function. This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy: there was a strategic imperative acting here as the matrix for an apparatus which gradually undertook the control or subjection of madness, sexual illness and neurosis” (Foucault 1980: 220).

of this irregular world. The crucial point pertaining to the research agenda I have been engaged with is that the “Machiavellian” skill to survive in the city by riding “*fortuna*” in line with the life-course or “livelihood” of oneself, *virtu*, is a dual articulation of the ethical and strategical capacities: *virtu* requires both being a “virtuoso” and a “virtuous” person. Any form of social relation requires *some* sense of a strategical *and* moral appropriateness. The very determination of that appropriateness underlies every articulation of an individual life-course and posits “an impossible position of subjecthood”, opened up under the pressure of the requirement to articulate the “capacity to govern” (mostly unfavorable) “circumstances”. Subjects are posited in pinpointed positions for emplotting the painful extases of time, disjointed from one another in the bitter experiences of migrants, through harnessing temporal aporias of social existence in *stories*. With particular reference to this thematic focus, I try to argue that an unfortunate yet ineluctable historical shift has occurred with the advent of neoliberalism — as I claim to have “witnessed” myself: the stakes of “struggling” (*mücadele*) in a marginalized yet “shared” course of life in the slums (or in “similar outcast landscapes” and spaces) for inhabiting a “place” have recently become reduced to “negotiating” (*müzakere*) a *proper* life.

I try to keep track of this “narrative shift” in terms of a proto-Foucauldian historical analysis of “subjecthood”s, which I consider the pinpoint of power today. The sovereign rules today in the utmost Foucauldian fashion, i.e. through the norm, in the lack of the disciplinary intervention of the state mechanism, where civil measures and self-management are called upon to manage, govern and create situations of control — the individual narrative means to subjectivize a meaningful and legitimate “life-story” underlies the current governmentalization of social

relations in an ironically “strict” way. It is not a coincidence that Deleuze (1992) had once said that the disciplinary society is over and that we are at the threshold of *societies of control* where control is “civil” and “private”. The ideals of the preceding century are re-adjusted in *subjective* terms — it is the subject who will *realize* them through self-management.

In that regard, today is the time of (what is currently called as) “embedded liberalism”: liberals of the day fully endorse Polanyi-based genealogies of the state-guided construction of free-market. Their old faith *either* in the universality of the model of rational and utility-seeking individual, *or* in the ineluctable naturalization of the clash of socio-economic interests in the “long run”, is being ruthlessly criticized today not by Marxists, Keynesians, post-colonials or poststructuralists, but by hardcore liberals. The liberal-democratic society envisaged and aspired today is considered by these “neoliberals” much less a “natural” tendency of human development, than an active “project” that should be realized via *active* and *deliberate* intervention in the civil and private spheres of life — creating moments of self-empowerment and self-governmentality. We should start with undoing the “evidency” of this paradigmatic call for a civil ethos of self-government, which brings in a much more “equipped”, agile and penetrative socio-cultural apparatuses of control than the good old nation-state. In one sense, this call for a much more “democratic” govern-mentality in the aftermath of the state betrays the true locus of the sovereign and therefore makes it much more “fragile” than ever: the call for “civility” and immanent government(ality) without the state is performed on the mere auspices of an anonymous locus of subjecthood sustaining “properness” of an action through negotiating his/her livelihood at the expense of another.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: “WHO FEELS ‘AT HOME’ FOR GOD’S SAKE?”⁶

Just feelin' things out for real, ya know?/ Just wanna do me for real, ya know?/
No reason to make it complicated, you feelin' agitated. . . / You love it or you hate it, fuck it/
Desperation, jumpin' off of street corners here/ Hustlahz lookin for buzz like “pop one in here”/
Local state officials. . . yeah they out of touch/ Getting money for some, aiyo, ain't nothin' much/
If television taught me any lesson/ It's “Image is Nothing” but yo I got a thirst. . . /
Nothing but yo I got a thirst. . . / Nothing but yo I got a thirst. . . /
So what's first? Your rings or your purse?⁷

Q-Tip — “End of Time” (featuring KoRn)

Yahya looked tired, very tired, yet he was standing still. He was tall and slim, with thick dark hair and mustache. *Very* thick. *Very* dark. He had a terribly sad, bitter, sour and thoughtful face — hard like the un-licked façade of a stone, an iron mask

⁶ Yahya, my “leading” informant from the HADEP Sultanbeyli district office and a construction worker like most of the others in the office, asking me in a vehement voice “rhetorically”, as part of his long “tiradical” response to my awkwardly dilapidated question about how the “folk” generally feel about their houses, construction and displacement.

⁷ Lyrics of the song “End of Time” by the famous “Muslim hip-hop artist” Q-Tip, from his debut album “Amplified”. I believe that the song presents the ultimate proto-Deleuzian theme of “subjectivization” that I problematize below. The *subject* that “speaks” in the song and describes a fictional “universal end of time” is not an “individual” subject proper, revealing a personal “experience” or a point of view in its particularity, but an “instance” or rather instantiation of the *experience itself*, i.e. unhindered “violence” in the streets. This “acephaleous” dreadful experience of violence *as such* presents its “universalization” in the song narratively and fictively as the “end of time” (i.e., a violent “end of the world”) to an audience that is considered relatively unfamiliar with it — with the violent life *'n da hood*. The song thematizes the end of the world, where the “universal end” of the “world in general” (the world as the “white guy” knows it) is what has *become* the “particular world” of the “hood”, the gang, the “nigger”, etc. It is the “hood” (the *world*) of the “nigger” that speaks through the song by universalizing itself (ineluctably) with a fictive image of the dreadful end of all time: this universalization could become nothing but the end of all time, of the world as we know it. On the other hand, the *only* point of positing one’s self or “subjectivity” as the narrator (articulator) of such a universalization is identification *with* the “thirst” and the “gun” *qua* “subjectivized” forms and violent instances and incursions of “desire” proper in its utter nakedness (i.e. the way it is *daily* experienced in the hood by the black community) *as* violence. In that sense, universalization of the particular daily experience of the black community *'n the hood* becomes the “end of time” and “end of the world” for the white guy in its fragile “universality”, where the black guy as the narrator is the ineluctable subjectivization of desire *as* thirst and gun, asking sarcastically, “so what’s first — your rings or your purse?” For the difference between “subjectivization” and the Foucauldian couple of “subjectivation” [*subjectivation*] and “subjectification” [*assujettissement*], see Chapter I below.

that was cast out of utter and bitter quandaries of life . . . His slightly sliding head seemed so overburdened with this face that I felt as if it was about to slip through his head and fall into his stiffly cutout worker's hands. I was sure that neither he, nor any of the others in the dusty and empty HADEP office (Hamit, Sadık and İlker — also construction workers like Yahya) would care at all, if such a seemingly “surreal” thing had happened and his face fell off. To put it with an awkward and inappropriate “intellectualism”, the *sur*-reality of such an “unexpected” event would actually be “vested in” the very reality of the room as the “normal” course of it.

Yahya turned to Hamit and asked as “abruptly” as possible to give him a “*dal*”⁸ of cigarette, while he was quietly falling (literally) on an old dusty chair near Sadık like a dead body falling down or an automaton suddenly turned off. He looked tired, “damn” tired. Hamit, hardly sharing *any* bit of my interest in the change of the “atmosphere” of the room with the *entrance* of Yahya, took out a packet of *Samsun* solemnly out of his shirt pocket (on the left of his chest) and gave Yahya a *dal*. Hamit did not even look at the packet, or at his hands — yet he had moved his stiff hands in an uncannily nimble manner, dexterously making the little packet quickly disappear: nobody (except me) could see that the *dal* he gave Yahya was his last cigarette.

I, on the other hand, was “thinking”, “wondering” and “contemplating” (with an extremely psychotic, self-assured “academic” instinct) on how Hamit had instantiated a splendid “example” of those performative micrological acts of self-dexterity that I have been taught “in the class”: he was at deep pains to hide the cigarette box with his quick hands in order to give the impression that there are

⁸ “*Dal*” is a slang word in Turkish, literally meaning the thinner bough (or, sometimes, a leaf) of a tree, actually signifying a “single” cigarette.

other *dals* in the box. He was, I thought and “marveled”, performatively setting up, articulating and exemplifying a daily “knowledge” and “technique” of conducting and sustaining relations with others in moral-egalitarian and/or communitarian terms, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*.

Yet it suddenly “came out” to me that, years before “putting on” the myopic glasses of academia, I had already seen many friends, pals, cousins and “uncles” of mine *also* doing the very same thing in the past. They *also* exemplified the very same “technique” in order to assure their addressee of the last “*dal*” of their cigarettes (with utmost non-Maussian⁹ terms) on the abundance, “*bereket*”¹⁰ and non-economical nature of their gifts. Remembering these past “instances”, nonetheless, did not comfort me at all, not the least assuring a shared horizon of daily life practices or experiences. On the very contrary, it made me *despise* my own lustful, mischievous and “pornographic” eye that had “neutrally and objectively observed” them — pray no, *watched and enjoyed* them. At that very moment, I detested this awkwardly “graphic” eye, focusing obsessively on details and little objects of “daily life”, on elusive mimics and passing remarks, in order to “open up” *pseudo*-Proustian Madeleine-cookie-experiences of blasting and transcending temporal and historical differences between me and them, retrieving the lost horizon of *experiences* “*speaking*” *for themselves*.¹¹

⁹ See Mauss (1990), Levi-Strauss (1987).

¹⁰ *Bereket* (a “root-metaphor”) means abundance, plenty, increase, fruitfulness, blessing, divine gift.

¹¹ “And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of Madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. The sight of the little Madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; (...) perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the forms of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed

Lost in this sudden and utter self-disgust, I could not hear what Sadık had been saying to İlker and me about AKP policies. I felt extremely dizzy and incapacitated — I had *failed* from the very outset in my alleged *sincerity* in “listening” to them. My sincerity was in fact nothing but an obscene supplement to the ever-spreading and “always concretizing” university discourse. The endeavor to *listen to* their “active” appropriation of their lives and experiences, or, to *listen to* “narrative (re)articulations” of their spatial, historical, structural, etc. “conditions” was, in the end, an endeavor to “listen” and, yet, “hear”: this endeavor referred not to them, or to their stories, but to *me* — it *belonged* to me, not to Hamit, Sadık and Yahya. To the extent that I indeed *could* disrobe my “academic” clothes and become a mere “ear to hear” or a “sincere intellectual”, I actually *had* but maximized the obscene enjoyment of/for the gaze of the “big Other” *qua* the producer of knowledge: my sincerity had made “it” all the more agile and “penetrative”. I felt suffocated — I hated myself, I wanted to apologize, to ask for forgiveness, to get out, to stop this “research” and kiss goodbye to my “thesis”, to academia.

I didn't. In sheer fact, practically, I wasn't even *failing at all* to hear Sadık's tirade on AKP — at least not as “bad” as I had “dramatized” it to myself: I was analytically recording it in my head and taking notes: “field notes”. I am “educated” well. I am equipped with the resolute, determinate and hence perfectly automated will to “understand”, to “hear”, to “open up”, to “explicate” . . . I am supposed to get

them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection”, (Proust 1989: 38); this lucid and perfectly eloquent, yet strikingly sincere reflection on a personal experience, for which no literary praise would be proper or adequate, has been abused by academics in every possible “pseudo-Benjaminian” way, for the sake of justifying the pornographic eye of the “university discourse” that is peeping on the lived-experiences and peculiarities of others' daily lives.

stuck to my interviewees, to their stories, to their experiences — to “open up” them (which means in brute fact to “dissect” them), to present them to the academic public, to debate, to demonstrate, to show, to prove, to disprove, to annul or to praise whatever is said *by* and *on* them, to make them and their experiences “visible”, their stories “audible” — a more polite and “politically correct” way of saying “legible” and “ready-to-hand”. I am *at pains* to fulfill a “noble” task. I experience deep traumas, get confused in life. Yet I find a way — go to clinics, get anti-depressants, overcome the traumas and write books, publish articles, conduct researches on poverty, violence, exclusion, segregation, oppression, resistance, multitude, revolution, narratives, stories . . . I get visas easily, go anywhere and “study” anything I consider “important”. I endure traumas of all sorts and make them “visible”. I hear. I see. I *am* the gaze. As for what *else* I *can* be — I don’t even know. I just *do* what I do. I am determinate, resolute, almost automated. I am a discursive machine — the ultimate “anti-politics machine”. I *am*. Yes.

However, this sudden sense of “opening up” and the ensuing self-aborrence did not remain merely “a portrait of the researcher as a young swindler” and “worked” in one particularly positive instance: crawling my soul in such self-disgust, desperation and incapacitating self-casistry, I caught for an extremely brief instance the sudden sight of a curious and dubious look in the eyes of Yahya gaping uncannily at me. Other than Hamit and Yahya, we were sitting at the HADEP Sultanbeyli district office with Sadık and İlker. Yahya had come in to the “office” very recently and was most probably wondering who the hell I was, without, nevertheless, looking “overtly” at me. I tried to be an “accomplice” to his (dis)play of indifference and turned my eyes away from him, but I was radically struck by a *relentless sense of “fragility”* that I saw in his piercing eyes in a fleeting flash of moment.

To be sure, I owe the striking influence of this “soul-smacking” and relentless “fragility” to my own “pathological” and “psychotic” self-disgust at that very moment. I was *already* searching (in vain) for a reason to tear my soul apart, to “punish and purify”, to “salvate” myself out of the agony of sinning ruthlessly in the name of “good” — of becoming an obscene supplement, an automatic-pornographic eye for the “academic institution” *qua* the big Other.

Nonetheless, as I will try to reveal here inasmuch as I can, my “fleeting” convergence with Yahya (and our mutual (dis)play of “accomplices” in disavowing this very convergence) created a much more “profound” influence than my “personal” sense of unsettling *self*-disgust. I found the ultimate reason to tear my unbearably obscene self totally apart in his bleak eyes, which were bleeding a sad yet binding darkness: suddenly clutched into the dark space of this gaze coming from an abyssal nowhere *beyond* temporality, I felt totally disintegrated in utter “decentrement”. This gaze had liquefied me into a “scum of the earth”, a “life beyond death” that could not die at all, like Oedipus at Colonus, the bitter blind “ancient” figure wandering aimlessly *beyond* and *around* life as such, condemned into a loop of calamity, circulating in havoc, around his own nothingness¹². Tormented alike under the elusive, yet “profoundly piercing” looks of Yahya, I had passed from *bad* to *worse*, i.e. from the debilitating universe of *personal guilt* to that of *exposed shame*, being “seen” by another gaze in my own lustful gaze. No more a sinner with respect to such a gaze that drives “out” rather than incarcerating, I was “caged-out” amidst a non-repentable darkness in the eyes of Yahya — without any stakes for atonement, for

¹² See, Žižek (2000: 152-8), for a revealing analysis of the tragedy of Oedipus *not* as the “modern” pseudo-psychological caricature of the “son-in-complex”, *but* as exemplifying a beyond-life existence “in between two deaths”. A deeply related theme of “post-symbolic” undead life is elaborated by V. Das in her ethnographic studies on “symbolic funerals” and mourning rites prepared by parents for their “raped-yet-alive” daughters (Das, Kleinman, Ramphale & Reynolds 2000).

dying in peace¹³. In such shame, my *self* was utterly *exposed* in all its disarticulate truth: an obscene supplement “obsessed” with the lives of others in every miniscule detail, yet living “beyond” life. A truly Oedipal ex-stasis, a deeply permeating sense of being totally *driven* out of the symbolic universe of reciprocity.

My shame was his fragility — a “relentless fragility” *beyond*. Although it seemed, at first sight, a fairly similar “look” that revealed a fairly common sense of insecurity or timidity anybody would feel in the presence of a total stranger, this “look” became a binding source of haunting and poignant “inspiration” for me in coming to grips with the exigencies of my own “being-there”, among the “inhabitants” of Sultanbeyli. I was “driven-back” into another scene, *mine* as much as *his*, an acephalous, non-subjective experience — that of the “drive”. This off-the-stage scene was a scene of being obsessed with (or, even, “becoming” *by itself*) one’s loss of life as such, of “livelihood”. It was a scene of wandering in between “here” and “there”, yet neither here, nor there; living *beyond* life. Tumbling down this black-hole to nowhere and eternally floating *within-yet-around* it in a nightmarish endless fall, I was naturally petrified with a soul-slaughtering fear. In that regard, my (itself psychotic) image of myself as the “psychotic-paranoiac” instrument and/or supplement of the big Other is a retrospective corollary of my sight of Yahya as displaying a deep and haunting abyss of fragility, a temporally disjointed state of

¹³ “A look at Wagnerian heroes can be of some help here: from their first paradigmatic case, *The Flying Dutchman*, they are possessed by the unconditional passion for dying, for finding ultimate peace and redemption in death. Their predicament is that at some time in the past they have committed some unspeakable evil deed, so that they are condemned to pay for it not by death, but by being condemned to a life of eternal suffering, of helplessly wandering around, unable to fulfill their symbolic function. Where is the death drive here? It precisely does *not* lie in their longing to die, to find peace in death: the death drive, on the contrary, *is the very opposite of dying*, it is a name for the “undead” eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain. The final passing-away of the Wagnerian hero (the death of the Dutchman, Wotan, Tristan, Amfortas) is therefore the moment of their liberation from the clutches of the death drive,” Žižek (2000: 291-2).

being, the true state of being “out of joint”¹⁴ in-yet-out-of time trying to become “accomplice” for Yahya.

Displaced with his family and many kinsmen torn apart from his village hundreds of kilometers away by his own fellow “townsmen”, yet set aside of the “livelihood” of the urban landscape he “lives” in as well, Yahya subjectivized through the relentless fragility of an existence in havoc, an “inhering” state of being-in-mayhem, a total loss of “livelihood” in the ultimate anthropological sense of “survival” — or, at least, the struggle for it, considering his “regular” daily suffering as an extremely poor Kurdish Alevi construction worker, living *beyond* the regular “earthly” running through of things, persons and affairs. Being a construction worker, marked with vilified religious, ethnic, political, social, cultural, etc. “attributes” and living in an utter state of disposability, left aside for possible future “uses”, being kept at bay as a construction worker, yet always kept there, made to wait, not to act, not to live, but to wait, being attributed a subjective livelihood as waiting *outside*, always expendable, yet always “ready” — wandering “around” and hence “beyond life”, waiting for intervals of being “driven” into work, becoming what

¹⁴ W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 5, lines 188-9:

The time is out of ioynt: Oh cursed spight,
That ever I was borne to set it right!

In *that* sense, as I will try to explicate below, Yahya became my “Hamlet against the grain”, with the relentless, ever-present fragility in his eyes, haunted by an out-of-joint state of being, having (literally) *nothing* in his life other than his incessant sublation of (or struggle against) the abjecthood he is driven into by the very world he is a part of, cursing the spite cast on him for eternally being in need of “setting it right”: being a construction worker, categorically-essentially-eternally “waiting” for a seasonal (or, most of the time, daily) “job”, thereby becoming someone who waits with *intervals* of limited and conditional work, rather than vice versa. He “lives” in a world without having a proper “part” or “role” to play in it, i.e. without being a proper part of it. His abjecthood consisted less in his overt ideological identification as a “public outcast” with respect to his ethnic or religious identity in its “positivity” and much more in his social being as a construction worker “waiting” – waiting for a conjectural moment of being *given* an “opportunity” to construct someone-else’s house in which he will never live, not even earning the pension to inhabit a place to live with his family and living constantly with the fear of a highly probable stake of being totally dispossessed, without shelter, without food.

“any becoming” leaves behind, becoming the drive to live without living, wandering undead.

What I saw with Yahya, in his looks and on his dark face was an abysmal temporal aporia, forced to fragility in the face of an uncanny future. Yahya was the abyss around which the governmental narrative of the district was set up, the “looped out” element to be subjectively displaced in creating “other” states of proper conducts and transactions. I want to study how the governmental-narrative set-up of the life-sphere could be articulated and in what subjective conditions while displacing the fragility Yahya and the life are *cursed* to.

I was indubitably affected and overwhelmed by Yahya’s uncanny presence in the room deeply, as well as by the dark shadows that turned his stubbly face into an uncanny screen of spectral apparitions, which were haunting and permeating the “air” between us through and through. . . Remembering our conversations afterwards, I can only “surmise” (well, “feel”) that these “apparitions” are overloaded shadows of the past, of the present, as well as of the uncanny future, none dovetailing at all, even eternally fleeting, lingering, lurking and haunting *beyond time*. The “lived experiences” in *his* sense of time had become undead apparitions on his face *beyond life*, over-shadowing the *presence* of his self in the form of a “mood” that assailed him haunted even his surroundings. . . Exemplifying the paramount travesty of “being-in-the-world” with the bitter look in his eyes, his very being was “*not-being-there*”¹⁵. As he had later said, “workers like [him] without a [proper]

¹⁵ “Being-in-the-world” is a categorical concept taken from M. Heidegger’s “existential analytic” of human existence as *Da-Sein*, i.e. as “being-there”: it denotes basically the devotion and belonging of human being categorically to a “world”. Human existence is always a being-*there*, since it is always open and belonging to a world, to which s/he is devoted through moods that “assail” him/her (Mulhall 1996). My point with regard to Yahya is that he looked like inhabiting an impossible position of being-*not-there*, while obviously being *among* us. He was like an “undead” figure that is not alive, but not dead either. This impossible position of being-somehow-in exactly through being-out

occupation” could not dwell on *anywhere in any time* — they are never “at home”¹⁶. It is in fact naïve to regard the uncanny air that surrounds Yahya as striking and surprising, rather than regular and expected

In that regard, I can finally construe (after my first encounter with Yahya and his face) that “self-consciousness” is *definitely not* a “noble” pain we unconsciously avoid, entrap, gentrify and “repress” in our notoriously “alienated” daily lives, which are, as the standard cliché goes, “in fact” spellbound by and embedded in our innermost and primitive *animalesque* drive for pleasure, while “pleasure” is just another name given to the fundamental natural-instinctual drive of our psychic being itself — the non-subjective *base* of consciousness, the “id”, the *élan vital*. On the most ironic contrary to this banal platitude, “self-consciousness” is a bitter and overwhelming luxury, reserved for the socially distinct few, who are “endowed” with the relevant social, cultural and “psychic” capital for utmost blithe indolence, indifference and insouciance towards the present and the coming future — towards “time” itself. In the lack of such a lethargic “capital” to bear, to “put up with” the *radically indeterminate* abyss of “future”, most under-class workers in big cities, like Yahya or Hamit, are drawn to a conduct and “consciousness” of life that robs them of a moment of subjective preference and direction — robs them of a proper self-consciousness.

The eyes of the man I was looking to did not reveal a deeper, inner or “truer” identity that is “dressed up” with social-cultural clothes — the shadows and the spectral apparitions on his face, in his eyes, culminated in a non-subjectivized

constitutes the ultimate focus of the perspective I try to elaborate here on subjecthood as a liminal opening through which social structures and relations are articulated as “subjectivization”; see Chapter II for a more eloquent articulation of this point.

¹⁶ “... bizim gibi öyle meslek sahibi olmayan işçiler gönlünce evinde barkında olmazlar”.

anxiety towards the uncanny future, a future he could not cling to in any means Yahya and the “look” in his eyes, which would have stroke anyone like a “psychic raging bull”, was the ultimate incarnation of “being held out into the nothing” that awaits a regular under-class construction worker.

Before Yahya started to display a warm affinity towards me and to “open up” his thoughts to me in a heated discourse, he spoke as if he was behind a thick wall of glass, where I could “see” but not have a true grasp of his position. As a matter of fact I did nothing but listen. Sadık, Hamit and İlker had also adjusted their discourse and their attitudes according to Yahya after he started to initiate the dialogue. And Yahya gradually thinned down the glass wall between us. But I was still stuck with the look in his eyes I had caught a while ago as well as the “now-overcome” fragility I saw in his eyes. His eyes started to sparkle with fire in half an hour and we had become pals drinking tea together, but, I did not feel a hermeneutical opening I expected to have felt after such a warm “opening”. Hamit and Yahya shared so much with me about anything I was curious about, and helped me for so many things I asked from them, but the true stakes of our communication was the pre-discursive realm of undead drives, torn-asunder fantasies, which abound in Yahya’s eyes.

As I will try to elaborate in detail below, relations-to the other, neoliberal or not, constitute nothing less than the ultimate performative horizon of *becoming a subject proper in “symbolic” terms*¹⁷: they crystallize “along” (or, “in the course of”) practical *daily transactions* that are being “skillfully” conducted by *virtuously virtuoso*

¹⁷ The word “symbolic” is employed in a very loose and “non-theoretical” sense here, e.g. recognized as an agent, as a force, as a role, as a means, etc. with efficient capacities to act, to interact, to be acted out, etc. In that “loose” sense, the adjective “symbolic” is reducible neither to a form of Levi-Straussian structural anthropology, nor Lacanian psychoanalysis, etc. On the other hand, for the purpose of terminological clarity on such terms, I prefer to use Lacanian concepts like the “Symbolic”, the “Imaginary” and the “Real” in capitalized forms.

subjects¹⁸. The very *skill of virtuosity*, on the other hand, depend on the availability of relevant (Foucauldian) *means, strategies, techniques and knowledges of justification* in the form of certain *repertoires* of action *in lieu* of the subject — i.e. embedded in his/her “environment” or “world” as a transactional network of relations. It is only through a “practical” (linguistic, discursive, idiomatic, material, mechanic, etc.) acquaintance with these *repertoires* and/or basic strategical frames of action could the subject determine and/or ascertain a course of action or a series of acts as a “proper conduct” — *the “right”, “proper”, “convenient”, etc. thing to do*¹⁹. The crucial point to be reserved once and for all is that the determination of a course of action or a “proper conduct” is what renders the subject *a* subject — there exists no ontologically accountable position of “the subject” or a non-corporeal “register” of “inner reality” (a non-transactional, non-social, non-relational, psychological, etc. realm or point) involved in this “determination”. The subject of social action *as* relating-oneself-to does *not* encompass an ontologically distinct “locus” of thinking-*as*-calculation through which what a proper conduct is could be “calculated”. On the contrary, any “strategical calculation” in the form of a virtuous transaction conducted by the

¹⁸ I invoke here the properly Machiavellian sense of *virtù*, which comprises *both* the “virtuosity” of artful perfection in the conduct of a talent, *and* “virtue” as a “moral” quality that endows its bearer righteous means to do the “right” thing. In that sense, *virtù* unites punctuality and correctness with rightness and righteousness, thereby opening a non-transcendent value-systematic for the “subject” — it is *immanent* in the relational social environment and yet in need of being articulated at irreducibly particular instances by a virtuous subject ascertaining what is “right to do”; in that regard, it is not that pre-given subjects acquire *virtù*, but that *virtù* “subjectivizes” itself in the symbolic recognition of a subject *retrospectively* as the bearer of relations-to others and the “conductor” of transactions; on the other hand, it is in need of particular articulations, each depending upon the well- or mal-conduct of the subject; for similar albeit different accounts of the Machiavellian moment of subject-hood, see Althusser (2001) and Negri (1999).

¹⁹ “Right” and the chain of concepts that follow could be juxtaposed at all thanks to the dual appropriation of *virtù* by Machiavelli: this “rightness” refers *not only* to the transcendent sense of a moral righteousness, the essence of which lies “outside” the subject and poses pressing limits on it, *but also* the practical sense of doing the “proper” thing as the most appropriate form of conduct. The subject *determines* (as will be elaborated below) a “meaningful” and “legitimate” course of action in that dual “movement”.

subject is an *instantiation* of a more or less distributed and “circulated” *sense* of “properness”, a la Machiavelli, which performatively emanates *itself* through acts and instances of relation-forming transactions a articulation of truth. In that sense, the “subject” is a relational *state* of being: there are only “states” of subject-hood without any subjects involved. To put it as bluntly axiomatic as possible: there is no subject at all, but performative instances of relating-oneself-to²⁰, which crystallize “along” virtuous conduct of transactions. These transactions, on the other hand, are “acted out” through articulation of daily strategies, conducts, acts and practices drawn out of a repertoire of social action. The subject “cannot” but relate — *ergo*, it “is not”, it can’t precede what it requires to be.

In that regard, by ascertaining the *relational mode* (or, as I would like to put it, the “dative case”) of *subjecthood* as an unusual yet efficacious unit of analysis, I henceforth reduce neoliberalism in “methodological” terms to local schemes of *transactions* comprising specific repertoires of actions, rules of (self-)conduct, and practices and strategies of “relating-oneself-to” others. In that sense, being vested in a particular *mode* of relating-oneself-to, which is always-already a management and government of *oneself* (requiring a Machiavellian-*strategical* virtuosity or knowledge of the self as a *knot* or a *fold* of relational networks to be “conducted properly”), I construe neoliberalism here as nothing other than a peculiar, particular and historical juncture of active *world-making* on the part of the subject, *pace* Heidegger, where I take “world” as “a widely ramifying web of socially defined concepts, roles, functions and functional interrelations” (Mulhall 1996: 72).

²⁰ Not relations but subjecthood is performatively constructed – relations do not have a reality, they are the reality itself – fantasy.

I will attempt to set forth *historical* crystallizations and peculiarities of these *world-making* transactions, albeit in an elementary fashion, in the subsequent sections of this chapter along with “humble” propositions to ascertain micro-level practical means of differentiating modes of subjecthood *historically*, which, hopefully, shall not pose meta-theoretical epistemological problems of axiology. The *performative* dimension of this world-making is vested in the subject’s *determination* of specific sets of acts and strategies in the form of *self-conduct* in “relating-oneself-to”: thanks to these *strategical* means to *determine* a course of action as a *conduct*, it becomes possible embrace and “act out” peculiar roles, positions, tracks and pathmarks, which provide what I would like to call a technical “know-how” of subjectivity — i.e., *virtuosity in efficiently managing or conducting one’s own (relational) conducts*²¹.

However, I would like to stress at the outset that the very idea of *determination*, despite appearances, does not call *at all* for an analytical-methodological “breach” in the argument I present here on “relationality” by introducing the “traditional” non-corporeal “subjective register” or “inner realm” of rationalizations, thoughts, ideas, perceptions, etc. On the contrary, a proper analysis of *determination* would require a *proto-Foucauldian practical social-analytics of action*, focusing on discursive, practical, material and, hence, *relational* means the subject relies on in order to acquire particular knowledges that will make it possible to *determine an appropriate* course of action. Therefore, such a focus on (instances of) determining the *appropriateness* (or, what we may alternatively call “social convenience”) of action through practical, technical and/or strategical terms in lieu of the subject, *necessarily* presupposes the analysis of a certain *governmentality* —

²¹ For the “original” analysis of the concept of “conduct of conducts” see Foucault (2007).

government of self-conduct. In that regard, this practical socio-analytics of determining and/or deciding acts of relating-oneself-to sets forth the ultimate performative dimension of social action, rather than initiating an interest in an “ontological” analysis of a *locus* or *agency* of decision and determination *qua* rationalization detached from the relational context and/or framework.

To put it more bluntly, (i) any social act is an instance of relating-oneself-to, bearing the stamp of a *peculiar relational mode of subjecthood*; (ii) any such “relating-to” provides a performative instance of *conducting* or *governing* one-self through irreducibly particular *determinations*; and, (iii) it is the production of *irreducibly subjective/particular* strategic and technical (means of) *knowledges* of “appropriate” self-conduct, the “acting out” of which in the form of *determinations* performatively *makes the world what it is* — an integrated and meaningful totality of XXX. The subject a la the necessary objectively-subjective lie is the undead flesh of the world

Nevertheless, although the theoretico-methodological “debris” espoused here obviously points towards what Foucault had called *governmentality*, it should have been clear by far that the very term “determination” insidiously inscribes a different *moment* in the course of “conduct of conducts” with its stress on the “irreducible particularity” of determining/ascertaining what is *appropriate* or *convenient* to do: I believe that it is not only misleading, but also debilitating to disregard the question on why a *particular* act and not *another* in a certain situation, alleging that such a questioning shall bring in the pre-posed and detached position of the subject of decision. A major set-back of such a dismissal is the unfortunate degrees of functionalism that haunts most of current studies on neoliberalism as being vested in various forms of *governmentalities* (Rose 1999; Dean 1999): the “literally” *exclusive* focus on conditions of possibility for doing an act in the form of a self-conduct (at

the cost of an alternative focus on the peculiarity of the subject's involvement in and construal of the act itself) reduces the self to a *site* for the enactment of the act, the *event*. This reductionism could hardly be overcome by an *allegedly* Deleuzian call for creative invention of selves, knowledges, practices, etc. (Rose 1999; Dean 1999).

In that regard, this irreducible particularity, sets forth the ultimate non-Foucauldian theater: a non-ontological focus on the irreducible particularity of subjecthood *qua* the relational moment of determination of peculiar strategies and techniques, presents the ultimate uncanny *register* of liminal fantasies sustaining any form of social action in the form of a “drive” — or *Trieb*, as Freud called it.

CHAPTER II

THE FLESH OF THE WORLD

The human being is this night, the empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity — an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him — or which are not present. This night, the interior of nature, that exists here — pure self — in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head — there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye — into a night that becomes awful²².

G. W. Friedrich Hegel

Life must be thought of as *trace*, before Being may be determined as *presence*²³.

Jacques Derrida

Despite all the recurrent arguments groveling sarcastically otherwise, *neoliberalism* is neither a magical word, nor an irrelevant pseudo-utensil employed on an unsound and *ad hoc* basis by theory-ridden social scientists. Nor is it an apocalyptic vision about a nebulous and dubious “dark age” yet to come: it is first and foremost a concrete and practical *mode of subjecthood*²⁴ that sets (and is set along) peculiar

²² Verene (1985: 7-8).

²³ Derrida (2001: 255).

²⁴ I prefer to employ the term “subjecthood” instead of the more common “subjectivity” due to the uncanny methodological position I happen to inhabit with respect to the never-ending debate on the ontological primacy of a “subject” before the ever-proliferating forms of “subjectivity”. The alleged “dethroning” of the classical “Cartesian” notion of a self-transparent subject (ontologically preceding the social relations it is entangled in) in favor of ever shifting subjectivities to be shaped and acted out is radically at odds with the peculiarly *decisionist* account I present here (and below) on “subject as the impossible *moment* of madness”, à la Kierkegaard, articulating and structuring “narratives” that emplot “social reality”. Nonetheless, despite my skepticism towards the current “celebration” of these ever-proliferating forms of non-static “immanent” subjectivities, neither am I prone by any means to presuppose an ontological locus, taken for granted in the form of a self-transparent reflexive (hence pre-Symbolic) subject preceding the “world” it is embedded in. I will try to account below for an “ontologically impossible” moment of the narrative *subjecthood*, i.e. a “moment of madness” inconceivable in *any* form of ontological terms without the relational deadlock it is thrown in with respect to *an* Other. Such a moment and its “undead subjectivization” in the form of a narrative act owes its very possibility to the plurality of social contexts it is entangled within, while it is irreducibly and “maddeningly” particular as an *articulation* in its instantaneous emplotment of social

*repertoires*²⁵ of daily-life strategies and practices of being-with *and* being-in-relation-to one another. In that regard, provided that we *may* ascertain a relational “way of being” as a *mode of subjecthood* with peculiar (sets of) practices and conducts, we may thereby construe neoliberalism as *just “an” other way the subject is in-relation-to the other*.²⁶

Therefore the neoliberal juncture, as would be the case with any “other” juncture of world-making, comprises local, particular, discrete, dynamic, ever-shifting and even incongruous sets, or rather, *repertoires* of actions, practices, functions and strategies in lieu of the subject’s “relational” setting among “others” — i.e. in its *world* as a “meaningful” and “legitimate” sphere of social action. The field research I have conducted in Sultanbeyli, which basically consists of “semi-structured” dialogues with various residents there, provided me with a coil-like set of interweaving narratives and accounts on such “relational” settings that my

reality, interweaving a massive coil of personal, albeit dynamic and ever-shifting narratives. In that sense, my deliberate omitting of the word “agent”, as well as sporadic appearances of the word “subject” in the text should be taken as nothing other than “figures of speech” that presuppose a theoretico-methodological preference of “subjecthood” as a unit and focus of analysis in contradistinction to the “subject” or “subjectivity” as worn-over methodological categories.

²⁵ I owe the “basics” of this methodological way of using the term *repertoire* to the extremely fruitful exchanges I (and others) had with professors Gavin Smith and John Clarke, as well as other respectful scholars and fellow graduate students, in a graduate student conference on neoliberalism in the Central European University on January 2007, where I presented a paper on Sultanbeyli.

²⁶ What will be at stake, however, in this “theoretical” claim (on the possibility of ascertaining and describing a “mode” among *others*) is *not* determining “scientific” and/or “methodological” criteria that grant a “particular integrity” to differing modes. Ascertaining such a “mode” does *not* entail elaborating systematic and *exclusive* differences that categorically, serially, temporally, spatially, logically, etc. distinguish one mode from an other, such that it bears an “inner nature” or a principle of “systemic continuity” as a “kind-term”, covering an exclusive set of *extension*. Such “means”, “criteria” or similar conceptual apparatuses “make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle, to subject them to the exemplary power of life (with its adaptations, its capacity for innovation, the incessant correlation of its different elements, its systems of assimilation and exchange), to discover, already at work in each beginning, a principle of coherence and the outline of a future unity, to master time through a perpetually reversible relation between an origin and a term that are never given, but are always at work” (Foucault 1972: 4). “So there is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear. There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security. Mechanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanisms, which would have replaced juridico-legal mechanisms. In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, *the system of correlation* between [different] mechanisms” (Foucault 2007: 8).

respondents were engaged in along with other residents. My conversations aimed, for a large extent, to see how these subjects *made sense* of these “relations” they were practically engaged in with others and how they *articulate* them as “meaningful” and “legitimate”. Being more than a methodological preference of focus, I consider the subject’s articulation of the “meaning” and “legitimacy” of its relations to others as the two major indices of their “accounts”: the “symbolic efficiency” of their narratives about their relations to “others” with whom they inhabited a network of transactions, as I claim as a result of my analysis of these narratives, depended on the possibility of creating a teleological account that “made sense”, comprising various practices and strategies.

Before going into the details of how or whether I can ascertain the peculiarities of neoliberalism in distinction to other junctures of “world-making”, I would like to elucidate a few points that will underlie both the theoretical underpinnings of the argument I pursue below and the methodological ramifications or constraints posed by the concepts I employ.

These *repertoires* are “visible” (i.e., in lieu of the subject) only as “practical rules” of social games to be “followed” a la Wittgenstein²⁷, or rather, to be repeated: they are properly non-abstractable rules in that they are already being re-iterated, re-instated and re-instantiated among other transactions. Repertoires that comprise these rules are “strategic” and “grammatical” constellations of particular rules in the form of practical sub-sets of “know-how” knowledges) constitute the basic *currency* of circulation in the daily lives of subjects.

Repertoires of social action, the potentiality of which are but immanent in the configurations of the actual, are dispersed among concrete, particular, tangible

²⁷ See, sections on what Wittgenstein calls “rule following activity” (Wittgenstein 1991).

and traceable *transactions* involving daily strategies and practices of “relating-oneself-to”. In that regard, they are far from crystallizing in overt, static or self-preserving sets of ascertained “choices” or “routines” ready at hand: they rather depend on the concrete, albeit changing limits posed by forms of “real” social differences between subjects — like primitive accumulation, race, status, origin, class, etc. In other words, they are immanent in the relational setting of a subject, bound and permeated by frames of differentiation between subjects — acting out practices of relating-to out of repertoires requires pre-established relations — it is not that the subject does and then retrospectively legitimates it — it *just does it* without legitimacy — the leaving out of which, i.e. the non-knowledge of which is filled in with “authority” – sovereignty.²⁸

It is always already there — the differences — in the form of “relations”. The immediacy of social differentiation, in turn, require articulation of “meaningful” and “legitimate” relations, through which subjects are acquired with means to *account for* these differences that permeate their “world” and effectively conduct transactions thereby.²⁹

Obviously, there emerges a “circularity” between repertoires of strategies and practices of “relating-oneself-to” and relations being articulated for accounting for

²⁸ “The point of his notion of ‘bio-power’ is precisely to give an account of how disciplinary power mechanisms can constitute individuals directly, by penetrating individual bodies and bypassing the level of ‘subjectivization’ (that is, the whole problematic of how individuals ideologically subjectivize their predicament, how they relate to their conditions of existence)”, (Žižek 2000: 253). “What if the price to be paid is that the power mechanism cannot even control itself, but has to rely on an obscene protuberance at its very heart? In other words: what efficiently eludes the controlling grasp of power is not so much the external In-itself it tries to dominate but, rather, the obscene supplement which sustains its own operation”, (ibid: 256-7).

²⁹ “*Da-sein*’s capacity to lose or find itself as an individual always determines, and is determined by, the way in which *Da-sein* understands and conducts its relations with Others. And the average everyday form of that understanding focuses upon one’s differences (...) from those with whom one shares the world, and regards them as the main determinant of one’s own sense of self. Our usual sense of who we are (...) is purely a function of our sense of how we differ from others” (Mulhall 1996).

differences: relations are supposed to be “picked” out of repertoires, while repertoires are immanent in articulation of social differences as a network of “meaningful” and “legitimate” relations. What I would like to propose is that this circularity of “relations” requiring “relations” is far from a conceptual abstraction that results in contradictions: it is what Marx had called “real abstraction”, which, as I would like to argue in detail throughout subsequent chapters, emerges through a constitutive circularity posited by and peculiar to the subject.³⁰

The initial point to be stressed is that the acquisition of “means”, as mentioned above, in order to be able to “account for” differences simultaneously opens up a relatively stable field of activity for the subject, which is none other than the repertoire of daily practices and strategies immanent in the subject’s “relational” setting. Nevertheless, the acquisition of those means In that sense, the subject embraces the Any moment of “relating-oneself-to” presupposes, at least, the possibility of rendering social differences in a “meaningful” and “legitimate” setting — every transaction involves an abstraction writ large into the real relations .

Any transaction involving “different” subjects, as well as their strategies and practices drawn out of certain repertoires, is bound with these “real” differences, since they mark a requirement on the part of each subject to articulate and pose its “position” amidst a given form of social differentiation. Articulation of a “position” to bear an appropriate role within the transaction at hand, nevertheless, could only be

³⁰ “Inasmuch as Marx produces a methodological conception of abstraction (...) different authors have concurred in seeing the 1857 *Introduction* as a break with a humanist or anthropological concept of abstraction and the passage to something like a notion of real abstraction — abstraction not as a mere mask, fantasy or diversion, but as operative in the world (...). Marx’s crucial theoretical revolution would then lie in passing from a fundamentally intellectualist notion of abstraction — which projects liberation as a ‘recovery’ of the presupposed genus (putting Man where God, qua distorted humanity, once stood) — to a view of abstraction which, rather than seeing it as a structure of illusion, recognizes it as a social, historical and ‘trans-individual’ phenomenon”, quoted from Toscano (2008: 57–75).

carried through out of the repertoires I mentioned above, which are bound by such “real” differences to be articulated accordingly — i.e. “accounted for”.

It is in that sense, therefore, that every instance of transaction calls *both* for an instantaneous a re-affirmation of social differences as functionally “natural” *and* a re-articulation of them as if they were encountered for the first time. What I would like to stress at that point is that the “position” a subject ascertains for itself through getting engaged in such “transactions” is nothing other than an indeterminate and nebulous set of endless relations to others that is articulated “as such” only at the instance of such conducts, bearing a retrospective effect of natural differentiation of roles between subjects, also naturalizing the position to be held by the subject. It is the subject’s relations to other subjects that make a subject what it thinks of itself to be — a relational framework for the subject in its making sense of the “world” as a “meaningful” and “legitimate” sphere of social action, inhabiting “other”s that the subject is related to in various contextual terms.

I need to introduce two major methodological concepts that I employed throughout my research: *difference* and *narrative*. Difference, as I consider it within the framework of this work, sets a radical limit for any form of social identity, in the sense that it always has to be “accounted for” — i.e. it always *precedes*, comes *before* the subject: it is always already *there* in the form of a “social context” with varying social positions, hierarchies, equivalences, equalities or conflicts. The indexical “presence” of the subject can become *presence proper*, i.e. bearing a “symbolically efficient” knot-point in a “meaningful” and “legitimate” set of relations for mundane transactions of various sorts to be pursued, only to the dubious extent that the subject holds *enunciative* means and measures, the relative convenience of which, nevertheless, may falter radically, to attribute “meaning” and “legitimacy” to other’s

difference. Holding an identity is to embrace an almost endless, dynamic and ever-shifting series of “relations” to others that are “different”, the “difference” of which pose a hindrance to be kept at bay by such enunciative means and measures. In that regard, trying to brush aside the theorist obsession with difference as what appears to be a rather “abstract limit” of subjectivity (the elaboration of which is under the monopoly of “deconstructionists”) from the perspective of a social anthropologist, I insist on the ever-present “symbolic efficiency” of more practical and “immediate” forms of difference that are considered rather unfortunately “politically incorrect” among today’s postmodern intelligentsia: class, property regime, land-labor ratio, status and/or income stratification, primitive accumulation, rents, etc.

Therefore, I claim that these “repertoires”, which present a relational framework for the subject in its making sense of the world as a “meaningful” and “legitimate” life-sphere are but a means for the subject to come to terms with, or rather to “account for” material difference. My initial/early informants in Sultanbeyli, for instance, were *muhtars*, who held relatively “respected” social positions not only in their neighborhoods or *mahalles*, but also among the wider district. What radically struck me in my semi-structured interviews with these “locally respected” men each holding a “relatively” esteemable wealth was the particular course of emplotment each had employed in his particular “account” on the general status of the migrants, the poor, their prospects “in relation to” their own status. One had to be blind “by all means” in order to fail to see that they were trying to equalize their status “discursively” in the account they provided to me to that of others in terms of wealth, social security, connections, legal capabilities, access to resources. This discursive attempt to equalize, or rather, “neutralize” material and/or practical difference, proved to be very “efficacious” for these informants in articulating very

dynamic “accounts” to me as I spoke with them: they ingeniously shifted their “tones” as they willed, sometimes “humbly humiliating” themselves as the “poor” who “can hardly stand by in the city”, sometimes aggressively and punctually denying that the poor are as poor as “they” claim to be.

At that point, I am far from “calling in” the standard *problématique* of contradiction vs. coherence that lies at the core of debates on ideology and discourse in the preceding century — still, unfortunately, haunting contemporary social science. I believe that such an analysis, focusing on contradictions or incongruities would leave out what I particularly focus throughout this research: *narrative emplotment* as a subjective means *not* to produce a coherent subject position à la Foucault within a game of truth, *but* to produce/articulate *coherence itself*.

I argue that the narrative emplotment of these actions and relations, i.e. of such repertoires retrospectively presume “meaningful” and “legitimate” positions, hierarchies or equalities for the subject in its relations to different “other”s. In other words, the subject retrospectively weaves a “meaningful” and “legitimate” sense of social relations it is a part of through narrative emplotment of these “repertoires” in its practical use of them. Far from being a pre-given set of choices or courses of action, these repertoires, therefore, are dynamic sets of action that are re- and re-instated or articulated in every instance. Nonetheless, I have to point out *strictu sensu* that I hardly have global structural differences or irreducible Gestalt switches between self-coherent “forms of society” in my mind while articulating the peculiarities of neoliberalism. As a hint of the general project I have undertaken in this work, I could claim that the subject’s making sense of a “meaningful” set of social relations it is entangled in and the sense of personal coherence in I

axiomatically maintain that the particularity of this neoliberal mode of “relating-oneself-to” is revealed through “narrative” articulations of daily practices.

I focus in this work on the exigencies of a socio-historical change —peculiar, as I believe, to the current decades— in the local and formal configurations of this “relational mode” to the specific extent that it is reflected in observable and traceable local daily-life practices on which this research is based. I prefer to call this particular mode of “relating to” the other as the “dative case of subjecthood”, henceforth reducing anything associated with the term *neoliberalism* to the historical re-configuration of this socio-relational aspect of subjecthood in terms of *repertoires* of social and cultural practice—specifically in the last decades. The field of this research, the Sultanbeyli district of İstanbul, sets a viable matrix of “change”, “locality” and “relationality”—forming the three essential indices of the argument expounded below—with the skein-like coil of narratives its inhabitants provided me with an infinite number of threads to trace after.

In that regard, this research entails (i) a methodological claim on the efficacy of focusing on *practical* crystallizations of subjecthood in its relational formations in the analysis of neoliberalism, (ii) a theoretical claim on the viability of a comparative analysis of two instances of the “dative case of subjecthood”, and (iii) a historical claim, substantiating the previous claim, on the traceable presence of a peculiar social change in the repertoires of practices available for subjects in their relations to one another.

One of the axiomatic premises of the argument below is that it is these practices and strategies—being conducted by socially “related” subjects—that sustain and crystallize the social, cultural, economic and political registers of collective co-existence. Hence, being a particular mode, among others, of “relating-

oneself-to” through specific practices, neoliberalism is construed in the argument below as nothing other than a historical juncture of “world-making”, *pace* Heidegger, defining the contours or, as hinted above, repertoire of “meaningful action” that retrospectively presume “meaningful” and legitimate social relations. The particularity of this neoliberal mode of “relating-oneself-to”, reveals the historical junctures of world-making, as I will try to argue henceforth, through a narrative articulation: daily practices as instantiations of the articulation of social practice of experiencing by creating, of creating by experiencing.

A “transaction”, on the other hand, is the most significant aspect of the subject’s relational setting in its world, since it serves as the ultimate moment of articulating such relations —hence roles, positions and functions— among other subjects conducting the particular transaction at hand: it sets a liminal opening that opens up indeterminate situations involving different parties. The “routine” commonly attributed to such transactions between subjects is one that is actively articulated at the very instance of conduct, requiring the parties involved to set forth roles, positions and functions to be “negotiated”. The conduct, therefore, involves a primarily indeterminate process of articulating relations, the outcome of which is (necessarily) presented, or rather “re-dressed”, performatively as a “routine” to be followed after.

Studies in 1995 showed that over 70 percent of the developing world’s urban population lived in slums; UN reports estimate that this number has reached 85 after 2001, while 40 percent of slum dwellers in Africa live in what the UN calls “life-threatening” poverty (Herr and Kar 2002). Elsewhere though, squatter communities are so well developed that they can’t properly be called slums. With multi-story buildings, shops, businesses and offices (even a squatter town hall) Sultanbeyli is now almost indistinguishable from the adjacent “legal” city. Despite the varying

conditions, the world's squatters hold certain things in common: they live in semi-sovereign, if squalid, mini-city states, paying no taxes and leaching services like water and electricity and, occasionally, some rights, from the "legitimate world". They operate in an illegal or informal economy of "legal" relations and transactional networks of circulation, and have only the most tenuous relationship with the "civic faces of the state". According to the UN, by 2030 a quarter of the world's population will be living like this.

Slavoj Žižek has called the growth of slums the "crucial geopolitical event of our time," and an "opportunity" for a truly "free" world." Slum dwellers, though in sore need of health care and minimal means of self-organization, are free in the double sense of the word, Žižek (2004) argues: "free" from all substantial ties; dwelling in a free space, outside the regulation of the state." Žižek warns against idealizing squatters as a new "revolutionary class" –their freedom really is another word for having nothing left to lose– but in the next breath he naively marvels at how beautifully squatters seem to fit into Marx's definition of a proletarian revolutionary subject: "they are 'free' in the double meaning of the word, even more than the classical proletariat ('free' from all substantialities; dwelling in a free space, outside the regulation of the state); they are a large collective, forcibly thrown into a situation where they have to invent some mode of being-together, and simultaneously deprived of support for their traditional ways of life."³¹ What I would

³¹ "The explosive growth of slums in the last decades, from Mexico City and other Latin American capitals through Africa to India, China, the Philippines and Indonesia, is perhaps the crucial geopolitical event of our times (...) Since, some time very soon, the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural population (this may already have happened), and since slum inhabitants will constitute the greater part of the urban population, we are in no way dealing with a minority phenomenon. We are witnessing the rapid growth of a population outside the control of any state, mostly outside the law, in terrible need of minimal forms of self-organisation. Although these populations are composed of marginalised labourers, former civil servants and ex-peasants, they are not simply a redundant surplus: they are incorporated into the global economy in numerous ways; many of them are informal wage-earners or self-employed entrepreneurs, with no adequate health or social security provision. (The main reason for their rise is the inclusion of the Third World

like to propose instead is to focus on the regimes and networks of truth, reality, legitimacy, security and legality that form loci for circulation of “strategies of survival”. For the utterly debilitating question “Idealization of the *properly* political potential of a wretched life and damning the a-political quest for ‘services’ from the state, *or*, defending the passive implosion of political unrest in the form of alternative governmentalities as heroic ‘strategies of survival?’” I would like to answer, “Yes please!”

A rather fancy question common among the intelligentsia and academia being insistently asked throughout the last decade was this: with the apparent collapse of the anti-globalization carnival and the impotence of the anti-war movement, could we be “on to” something, at last, with squatters, the billion ex-peasants, entrepreneurs and derelicts who are starting to numerically dominate every city in the world outside of the northern and western hemispheres? Taking this question “ironically relevant” at first glance in terms of discursive credibility and “circulation”, I will (i) move from the literature on the “political potential” of the slums (ii) to (micro-level) political mobilization of Islam and try to give a concluding scheme on the articulation of legal categories of the “civil space” in Sultanbeyli through Islam. The extra-legal “by-lives” of the slums are extremely complex to be reduced to strategies of survival or public potential for political mobilization, but they do lead to a network of interactions that entails *some* modes of articulation, while excludes *some others*. What kind of a “governmental” alternative

countries in the global economy, with cheap food imports from the First World countries ruining local agriculture.) One should resist the easy temptation to elevate and idealise slum-dwellers into a new revolutionary class. It is nonetheless surprising how far they conform to the old Marxist definition of the proletarian revolutionary subject: they are ‘free’ in the double meaning of the word, even more than the classical proletariat (‘free’ from all substantial ties; dwelling in a free space, outside the regulation of the state); they are a large collective, forcibly thrown into a situation where they have to invent some mode of being-together, and simultaneously deprived of support for their traditional ways of life” (Žižek 2004).

poses the political mobilization of survival strategies as a generative network of these articulations?

Two famous studies touch tentatively — inadvertently even — on the prospects of political mobilization in the slums, without endorsing it. The provoking question I (and these two studies) will pose is that it might seem pretty callous to speculate from the comfort of the West about political “opportunity” in third world slums when people don’t have clean drinking water or flush toilets. Or is it utterly necessary to move beyond the standard pity and fear of slum-dwellers and start recognizing them as political agents, not just victims?

This seems to be Neuwirth’s aim in *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World*, although he doesn’t actually note or promote the development of squatters’ political capital. Neuwirth, a journalist based in New York, spent two years living in some of the world’s burgeoning slums. He was dazzled by squatters’ resourcefulness and doggedness, but these individualistic qualities don’t seem to lend themselves to the building of co-operation within or between communities. While living among relatively prosperous squatters in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro’s 150,000-strong shadow city, Neuwirth argues that people hardly noticed the army’s forced eviction of squatters in the capital, Brasilia — “Their solidarity did not extend much beyond their street” (Neuwirth 2004).

The most interesting section of *Shadow Cities* is the chapter on “Proper Squatters, Improper Property,” where Neuwirth discusses Hernando de Soto and Peter Marcuse’s views on squatters, which represent the difficulties of grappling with the phenomenon of squatting in traditional ideological terms. De Soto, a free marketer, wants to release the “dead capital” that squatters’ property and entrepreneurship represents by immediately granting legal title deeds. Then the

credit cards and consumerism will come. Marcuse surprisingly seems to have rather less hope for squatters. As a result of their selfish pursuit of their own betterment, Marcuse says, squatters' communities – if they can be called like that at all – are disorganized and inefficient, no model for a radical urban future.

Rocinha, the largest of Rio's 600 *favelas*, now has all the trappings of normal urban life: grocery stores, banks, video rental stores, restaurants, a nightclub, even three health clubs and a postal service. Rocinha also has a small McDonald's, credit card companies, loan shops, and a cable TV supplier – there are more TVs than fridges in the *favela*. This is *asfaltização*: the inevitable gentrification of slums that happens everywhere, since governments – made to feel insecure by people who apparently don't need them – resist the temptation to tear down these rebellious neighborhoods and instead open channels and spaces of extra-legal regimes and schemes of legality and administration.

In *Planet of the Slums*, Davis (2007) is cautious about perceiving slums as bubbling political volcanoes: “the [l]eft [is] still largely missing from the slum,” he says. Islam and Pentecostalism are the unifying forces in the slums of Morocco, Latin America and Africa, occupying “a social space analogous to that of twentieth-century socialism and anarchism.” While squatters don't fit into old-fashioned categories, or demonstrate much political solidarity, Davis notes that slum dwellers are “the fastest growing, and most unprecedented, social class on earth.” Are we really seeing an accelerated version in the developing world of the slum stages that western cities went through, as Neuwirth intimates? Or are we seeing a humanitarian crisis of a different order, one caused by neo-liberal pressures on agriculture and simultaneous loss of jobs in cities – a different order that creates its

own “shadow” world as an extra-legal regime of “exception” that proves the governmental “rule of the civic law”? (Davis 2007).

Davis sees *less* an under-recognized political potential *than* an under-recognized humanitarian catastrophe. Worse, it’s a catastrophe that is irreversible under present conditions: “The labour-power of a billion people has been expelled from the world system, and who can imagine any plausible scenario, under neoliberal auspices, that would reintegrate them as productive workers or mass consumers?” The development of Rocinha offers one such scenario of integration – or appropriation – of the outside world into the (former) slum, yet it is highly dubious that this model of slum gentrification will not transplant itself and neuter the possibilities of new models of ownership and informal economic activity latent in the world’s slums? The informality mentioned here falls prey at the threshold of extra-legality, though which regimes of normality “governmentalize” the exceptional state of the slum as an alternative formality.

Similarly, for decades, rapid urbanization, particularly the mass rural/urban migration and the growth of large cities, and associated questions of urban squatters, degraded environment, inadequate infrastructural services, informal economy and poverty have emerged as major issues of urban studies in Turkey. Most of the research naturally focuses particularly on the various features, nature and dynamics of a “global city”, Istanbul, in contemporary Turkey. Now I will try to give a historical snapshot of these studies.

In the early 1920s, when Westernization defined the main political dimension of the so-called “state-centric” Turkish modernity, one aspect of its sociological grounding was created through a republican-authoritarian vision of urbanism that was viewed as necessary for the making of Turkey as a civilized and

modern nation. In other words, urbanization was viewed as a proper prescription for modernization. However, the rural character of Turkey did not change much for a long time. Although the country has undergone very rapid urbanization since the 1950s, present-day Turkey, its urban population still remains one of the less urbanized of other peripheral European countries.

As in many developing parts of the world, urbanization in Turkey has largely been driven by rapid rural migration, thus characterized by a rapid “growth”, the growth of large metropolises, the lack of basic infrastructure, and the resulting negative impact on human welfare in the cities, such as poverty, unemployment, informal economy, deficiency of housing. It is obvious that the development of urbanization in Turkey in the twentieth century has been an inseparable part of the larger history of “modernization” in the country.

After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, the primary aim of Turkey's political and intellectual elites was to attain “the contemporary level of civilization” by establishing its economic, political, and ideological prerequisites, such as the creation of an independent nation-state, the fostering of industrialization, and the construction of a secular and modern national identity.

As noted by Bozdoğan (2002), in her volume *Modernism and Nation-Building, Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, “modern architecture and urbanism were, by definition, the most potent visible symbols of this desire to create a new and thoroughly modern nation” (p. 67). It is within this context that the Kemalist elites attempted to remove the traditional rural image of the Turkish society, the existence of which was regarded as one of the main aspects of the backwardness of

Turkey. Thus modern architecture and urbanism were seen as the key elements of the will to modernity in the Turkish Republic.

Bozdoğan offers a cultural history of modern Turkish architecture from the Young Turk revolution of 1908 to the end of the Kemalist single-party regime in 1950, in which she also portrays the ideological background of urbanism embedded in Turkish modernism in the late Ottoman period. This argument entails the claim that, if the modernity-urbanism relationship in the early Republican period is considered anew, then in many ways it is a reformulation of the urbanism question in the late Ottoman period.

Although Bozdoğan does not directly focus on the urbanism issue in the early Republican period, it indirectly and discursively examines the political, historical, and ideological background of the idea of urbanism that prevailed in the country's modernizing agenda since those early years. Within the “old versus new” construct of the revolution time, it was the “dirt and dust” of the imperial capital, Istanbul, against which the newness and cleanliness of the modern capital city Ankara were celebrated as a republican icon. As noted by Bozdoğan (2002), this was a period of “nationalizing the modern”. The idea of national architecture began to dominate the architectural culture in the country, particularly emerging in the monumental modern architecture in the urban settings, as being representative of state power and nationalist ideology.

An outstanding feature of the urbanization process in a developing country like Turkey is the increasing concentration of urban population in a few large metropolitan cities. Nearly one-quarter of Turkey's urban population is currently living in the three big cities; the largest one is Istanbul, which has more than 10 million inhabitants, making one-fifth of the country's population. The alarming

growth of population in Istanbul is to a considerable extent attributed to mass migration of nearly 400,000 newcomers every year, the majority of them being rural residents. The implications of this demographic picture for employment creation, provision of food and housing, social services and protection of urban environment are enormous. Nearly one-third of the population in Istanbul is living in squatter or semi-squatter type settlements. More than one-quarter of the inhabitants in the city are estimated to be living in relative poverty. Some sectors of the city population such as recent migrants, women and youth are particularly vulnerable in terms of access to employment and income. Public investment often misses the urban poor, with expenditures biased towards the higher-income groups. The lack of social services leads to higher fertility accompanied by high infant mortality amongst the urban poor, particularly amongst the recent migrant families.

Erder's discussion of the "squatter neighbourhoods in Istanbul" (Erder 1996, Erder 1997), highlights the importance of recognizing that the city itself is today emerging in a completely different historical juncture, socio-economic context, and cultural currents. She uses empirical evidence of the particular conjuncture of "rural-urban migration", "*gecekond*" (squatter housing), "local migrant communities", "township solidarity", "locality", "informal economy", "land mafia", "inequality", "poverty", "social exclusion", "identity" and "ethnicity", and the configurations of politics, economy, and culture in the various neighborhoods of contemporary Istanbul. Erder's book does not only reflect the fact that Istanbul, like many other cities, presents a specific representation of various ideologies of social, political, economic, and cultural relations and practices of processes and structures, but also gives the implication that there have been changing representations of rural migrants in academic discourse. Over the years, not only has the perceived position

of rural migrants in squatter housing areas changed, but also their real socio-economic position has been radically transformed, often placing these migrants, particularly those newcomers, into a new form of urban poverty.

Vital to a consideration of the political economy of squatter settlements is the kind of assessment of the nature of urban poverty in a squatter settlement, Sultanbeyli, as undertaken by Isık and Pınarcıoğlu. In their book entitled *Poverty in Turn: Squatter Housing and Urban Poor: the Example of Sultanbeyli*, the authors express concern about the changing nature of poverty in the peripheral squatter settlements in Istanbul in the post-1980 period when Turkey went into an economic liberalization program, and about the coping strategies of the urban poor against these changing conditions. Of course, one aspect of this economic liberalization process, which had enormous impact on the urban poor, is directly linked to globalization. If global cities are viewed as one of the “natural” consequences of the post-modern societies in the globalization process, then “urban poverty” can be seen as one of the expected, probably not unintended, consequences of these city settings. I will devote a section below both to the academic setting around this subject and try to give “bureaucratic/administrative” summary of the legal documentation on my filed.

Although context is all-important, as a general observation, states that follow an administrative rationalist path are most likely to see governance as the management of common affairs of the state, public and private, through formal institutions of the government and experts. This is in contrast to states employing more participative or “communicative” forms of governance in which the management of common affairs of political communities involves more than formal institutions of government, e.g. home, work, economy, community-based

organizations (Healey 1997). I want to examine here some of the contextual issues, offering insights into the “governance” processes and structures; review the legal and institutional framework to question the relevance of such a “legal administrative rationalist” approach within this context.

Turkey’s case is complex “in general” – issues of governance necessarily include social structures that are vested with both long historical “legacies” of power and domination, as well as with instant experiences of the bitterness of survival. The Ottoman governance structure was based on a centralized empire with a decentralized system of administration which allowed many different ethnic and religious communities to maintain their community interests. But such a structure did not imply any self government in the modern sense, and was designed to ensure “unity in diversity”. Throughout the Republic’s drive to modernity was vested certain elements of “continuity” with the old Ottoman order; in particular, the tradition of state centralization remained in place as the accepted model of state-society relations. In order to put into practice such radical transformation, it was believed, a strong centralized state was necessary. To summarize, therefore, the period between the establishment of the Republic and the Second World War was characterized by statism, one party rule, constitutional and legal reform, and economic upheaval.

An early gesture towards decentralization was the 1930 Municipality Law. It gave local municipalities the power to regulate local commercial life and to provide local municipal services, but in their capacities as extended parts of central government. Local revenues were collected by central government and used towards the industrial effort in large metropolitan areas. Municipal authorities were excluded from any active political or economic decision-making, and their powers

were weak. The real power lay with central government who appointed provincial governors to oversee the functioning of various ministries at provincial level (Özcan 2000).

In 1963 local elections for municipal mayors were introduced, and a proportional representation system was employed. By the 1970s the rising power of social democrat politics began to express itself at the municipal and national levels. Social democrat municipalities in major metropolitan cities introduced new concepts of local governance, emphasizing democratization and public participation. During this period, clashes with the right wing central government were frequent. The interim military regime of 1980-1983 tried to centralize the municipalities and weaken the left wing municipal administrations. However, a real restructuring of municipal government took place after the Motherland Party introduced the Greater City Municipalities Act in 1984 which unified the various levels of local administration, giving the metropolitan municipalities extensive powers over the district municipalities (ibid).

Today Turkey has 80 provinces, and within these provinces there are a total of 849 districts. Provincial governors remain in charge of coordinating and assisting service provision, and with the investment projects of various central government institutions within the province. Directorates of different ministries in each province function under the control of the governor. The bulk of the revenues of provincial local administration come from its shares in general taxes and grants provided by the central government. There are 3215 municipal authorities, and 15 greater city municipalities, which are mainly metropolitan areas of large cities. The municipalities are the only institutions open to local democratic participation. Their revenues come mainly from taxation of property (ibid).

The currently dominant liberal discourse of “good governance” requires a move away from the administrative-rationalist reliance on technicians and experts and seeks wider participation in governance through “decentralizing” power, i.e. to municipal bodies. According to this discursive narrative of “minimized and decentralized state = minimized power relations” as applied to Turkey, legislation over the years, particularly the 1984 Greater Municipalities Act, has paved the way for such a move, but the “centrist” tradition has made it difficult for Turkey to abandon administrative-rationalist-bureaucratic methods. Thus, there exists a duality between “centralization” at the provincial level and “decentralization” at the municipal level. The way I would like to set the issue entails re-problematizing this problematic of duality as constituting a full-functioning legal system of extra-legality: the very “incompleteness” of the non-state discursive formations of liberal-democratic rationality of good governance (articulated and performed by nearly every municipality, whose problem with the centralist domination is less liberal governance and more “governing” the risks of poverty, social exclusion and traumas of migration) provides perfect means of “governing”. The legal state of “exceptionality” articulated by “decentralist” municipalities prove the sovereign rule of governing the risks and threats haunting the nation.

The duties of the greater city municipalities as set out in the Greater City Municipalities Act of 1984 are as follows:

1. to make investment plans and programs for the city
2. to make and implement the master zoning plan
3. to approve and control the implementation of the urban development plans
4. to execute water, public transport and sewerage services

5. to coordinate affairs between district and township municipalities and to mediate in disagreements between municipalities (Ozcan 2000)

With reference to point 4 regarding water and sewerage services, the State Hydraulic Works division (DSI) of the Governor's office had been the responsible body prior to 1981. However, the successive waves of migration to Istanbul from rural areas put tremendous pressure upon the DSI which by the early 1980s was unable to cope with the new demands for services. The *gecekondu* migrants in particular were recognized as the major strain on services:

The population of Istanbul has increased very rapidly due to the migration movement especially originated from the South Eastern provinces of Turkey... Plundered areas all around the city made the performance of the services more difficult as they have no infrastructure... [The DSI] was no longer sufficient to meet the water and sewerage needs of increasing population (ISKI 1999: 16).

As a result, a new law (number 2560) was passed to provide for the creation of the Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration (ISKI) which would be responsible for services within the Metropolitan boundaries. After the passing of the Greater City Municipalities Act in 1984, ISKI became an organ of the Metropolitan Municipality. The Board of Directors, comprising technical, financial and legal experts, as well as the Chairman who is also the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, is responsible for ISKI policy (Baharoğlu ve Leitman 1998).

Neither the formal private sector, nor national and municipal authorities were able to cope with the demand of Istanbul's mostly poor population for residential land, housing and services. Large numbers of rural-urban migrants, possessing few resources, resorted to invasions of large unused tracts of state land and created their own settlements, erecting dwellings within very short periods of time. The word "*gecekondu*" in Turkish literally means "built overnight". These dwellings are deemed illegal because they are either: a) built on public land usually

belonging to the Treasury; b) constructed on private property not belonging to the homeowner; c) built on shared-title land; and/or d) constructed without occupancy or construction permits (Baharoğlu ve Leitman 1998). According to figures supplied by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement, in the first half of the 1960s 45% of Istanbul's population lived in irregular settlements, but by the 1980s this figure had increased to 70% (Bugra, 1998). Such a spectacular development could not have occurred without the state's complicity, nor in the absence of public sympathy for the plight of the migrants.

In 1949, law no. 5431 was passed to allow the government to demolish *gecekondu* as a violation of property rights and the modern city image (Yonder 1998). Whenever demolition was attempted, however, "it was regarded as an act of cruelty against helpless individuals and represented as such by the media" (Bugra 1998: 307). Law no. 6188 passed in 1953 was a reflection of this, and provided for existing *gecekondu* to be consolidated, only new construction to be demolished, and for State lands to be made available on easy terms of payment for new housing construction. As a complementary measure, the Turkish Real Estate and Credit Bank, as well as the Social Insurance Fund would make available credit for low-income housing. In reality, however, it was mainly civil servants and other middle-income groups who eventually benefited (Keyder and Öncü 1993; Baharoglu 1996; Bugra 1998).

Legislation issued after 1948 gave municipalities the primary responsibility for dealing with *gecekondu* and encouraging new housing construction. But municipal administrations were restricted by limited revenues and strong central government controls which directed development towards "beautification" and/or gentrification programs, further dislocating large numbers of people from the city centre and into *gecekondu* settlements (Yonder 1998).

By the 1960s, *gecekondu*s began to be perceived as an inevitable consequence of rapid urbanization and economic development. They were providing a source of cheap labor, thereby serving the state's economic interests, and were also a solution for the housing needs of the urban poor. Moreover, by offering support to these settlements, politicians could capture the *gecekondu* vote at election time. Election campaigns during the mid-1960s began to feature *gecekondu* amnesties that legalized large areas of informal settlements. A conference held by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement in November 1965 featured Prime Minister Demirel stating that the demolition of *gecekondu* without providing alternative shelter was totally out of the question: a wave of land invasions in Istanbul followed.

The first two "Five Year Development Plans" (1963-72) recognized the need to increase mass housing construction, as well as the upgrading of existing settlements; the *gecekondu* law no. 775 of 1966, and amended in 1976, facilitated the latter. Legalization schemes were also instituted. All these developments provided increased security of tenure to the settlers, as well as the extension of infrastructure and service delivery to these areas by government. As a result, *gecekondu* land and housing, like the authorized housing stocks, became a subject of speculation, and new *gecekondu*s started to be built for profit rather than as shelter for those who could not afford formal housing. A new *gecekondu* Law no. 2981 passed in 1984 amnestied all *gecekondu* built up to that time, and more importantly it specified that they would be re-developed in line with the authorized housing stock; this generally allowed for their re-construction as multi-storey units (Bugra 1998; Baharoğlu 1996; Baharoğlu & Leitman 1998). Existing *gecekondu* owners used the opportunity to build multi-storey buildings on their existing plots, keeping some accommodation for their own use, and either selling or renting out the remainder. Today, this

commercialization of *gecekondu* is illustrated by the fact that most owners did not enclose the land themselves, but purchased it either from the person who initially appropriated it (56.22% in Istanbul) or from a relative or a real estate agent (19.2% in Istanbul) (Bugra 1998). The commercialization process has gained a moral legitimacy: Turkey's moves towards a market economy since the 1980s has meant that the state has been unable or unwilling to intervene and make provision for human needs, including adequate shelter (ibid). "Instead, the state's approach towards urbanization and the urban poor has been described as, financing the whole urbanization process through the massive ground rents generated by rapid urban development and fuelling and then manipulating these ground rents as an income redistribution mechanism" (Pinarcioglu and Isik 2000: 5).

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE GOVERNANCE OF DISSENT

But what is foreclosure? Surely it is to be located in a different register than discordance. . . . There is only foreclosure when there is speaking. . . . Foreclosure has to do with the fact that something may or may not be spoken. And of that of which nothing can be said, it can only be concluded with a question on the Real³².

Jacques Lacan

The imitation of action [*mimēsis praxeōs*] is the plot³³.

Aristotle

What struck me most during my interviews and talks with the local townsmen, “*muhtar*”s, experts of the municipality, state officials and local representatives of political parties in Sultanbeyli was what I would later call a “loop of displacement” in their narratives on how the district was gradually formed almost *ex nihilo* in the last decades: although the narrative, in the overall, depended on the exigencies of the particular “history” of each of my addressees, there was indeed a common element, some kind of a “temporal loop” emerging randomly in almost all of their narratives. This “loop”, as much as I could ascertain in my research, crystallized in an ambiguous attitude on the part of the narrator through sporadic displays of “uneasiness” while speaking about (exigencies of) the very initial period of survival after migration³⁴. I prefer to call this early period the period of “primordial survival”,

³² Jacques Lacan, *Lé Seminaire, livre 19: . . . ou pire* (December 8, 1971), quoted, from Reinhard (2005: 59n).

³³ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 50a1, quoted, from Ricoeur (1984: 34).

³⁴ The “uneasiness” I have in mind, as I have to note, does not bear “existential” traces of the Freudian *Unheimliche* or the Heideggerian *anxiety* (haunting the subject in a bitter agony that cannot

which has brought about a life-sphere with specific relational networks — fields of activity, forms of subjectivity, rules of conduct, transactional routines, etc. By focusing on the period of “primordial survival” in the narratives on the gradual formation of the district as a specific life-sphere, I will try to analyze the peculiarities of this (more or less ascertainable) “temporal loop” in these narratives.

As I will try to elaborate below further, I claim that, with this loop, the narrator is thrown in a liminal state, a position of impossibility, which involves a psychic retour of certain antinomies *out of which s/he has to come back*: “I have to *get away* from that Thing which I am getting uncannily closer to as it springs up in my speech — that Thing which haunts me more and more the closer I get to it”; *but* “I have to get back to that Thing, which I am getting away from, in order to say what needs to be said — in order to make myself say *it*”.³⁵ As I will try to outline the peculiarities of it, the narrator gets weaved in his/her own narrative by embracing the paradoxical act of “disposing by disposal” — setting forth *as* setting back, i.e. “dis-placing”, which therefore necessarily bears the form of a self-enclosed loop.

This present-yet-absent “liminal” turn of the narrative screw addresses a certain element that springs up in the narrative by virtue of the narrative’s own teleological unfolding. Nevertheless, this addressing succeeds in the form of a failure to bring that element in the narrative properly, hence becoming a failure to address. Therefore, being displaced in the narrative through a successful failure to be addressed, that element serves the unfolding of the narrative in its being “looped out” — it is there (as the displaced element), but not there (as the part of a temporal

be “subjectivized” or “symbolized” properly), but a naïve display of stress – although, as I will try to elaborate in detail below, this humdrum “display” is not as naïve as it presents itself to be.

³⁵ One could hardly present a better illustration of the “formative” conflict between what Freud called the “pleasure principle” and the “reality principle”.

flow in a narrative unfolding). Returning to the particular element that is “looped out” in the narratives my addressees provided with me, i.e. the period of “primordial survival”, I can therefore say, as an opening remark to clarify what I am dealing with, that most of my addressees looped out how “people”, fellow folks, others, etc. survived in the big city decades ago and gradually inhabited the space that was to become Sultanbeyli.

This loop that seems to hinder the smooth-run of the narrative is one that needs to be passed through in order “out of which”³⁶ s/he returns *in* the Real of his/her being – i.e. the “flesh of the world” as the relational framework of a subject phantasmically supported this return in the real bears a form none other than what I call a “displacement” that both presents a certain thing and sets aside from the (symbolic) order of present things. In that sense, it is *both* an opening that closes upon itself *and* a closure that opens up a liminal breach — thereby having the structure of a “loop” *that should not have been there at all*. In narrative terms, it is a “successive failure” to address a certain X in discourse: this very X “comes up” in the horizon of my narrative, albeit to be closed up *as if it had never come up*.

It was a “loop”, bending and folding upon itself in the narrative, since it functioned in one way or another as a “temporal” parenthesis, an ephemeral and fleeting “opening” in the temporal flow of the narrative, barely perceivable, and closed on itself at the very moment the temporal fluidity of the narrative, i.e. what Ricoeur had called “narrative time” comes to be at stake.

³⁶ The proposition employed here, “out”, paradoxically represents anything but the ontological impossibility of a “thereness” or, hence, “hereness” with respect to human existence as “being-there” (*Da-sein*) *a propos* of this “temporal loop” of narrative time; therefore such *pro-positions* (as well as standard adverbs referring to temporal states of time) that are employed in the course of my own discourse about these “loops” should be taken as ineluctable “figures of speech” that reflexively carve out uncannily “loops” hovering in my discourse — “How can I set *my own* narrative, albeit an “academic” one, that insists on the ontological impossibility of a certain X, through linguistic acts that *presuppose* the indexical availability of ontologically specified time/space relations for that very X?”

The field study I had in mind was a state ethnography that would delve into the governmental and transactional reality of the legal sovereignty of the Turkish State — sovereignty as a daily life practice, or, the state in its practical relationality. I had many big visions in my mind about Islam, the state, modernity, secularism, rule of law. I still have some of them. But after my study, I can say that my concern is, to put it as bluntly as possible, the social and political perceptions of poverty and of the established property regime among the inhabitants of Sultanbeyli. I want to hypothetically ask whether and to what extent these perceptions serve (respectively in related yet different ways) as the indices of practical and reiterative discursive limits of the “governmental” and “exceptional” existence of the state’s sovereignty, which acts as the ultimate and incontestable maker, marker and protector of Law.

I am after the normative-cultural underpinnings of the legal-sovereign as the locus of contestation and/or naturalization of stratification, inequality, unjust distribution of wealth, etc., the scrutinization of which requires what I would like to call an “anthropology of sovereignty”. In those lines, I am conducting a legal anthropology of social stratification and inequality in Sultanbeyli, in order to re-set the classical anthropological notion of “survival” as the locus of both “the life of the law”, as the famous anthropologist of law Laura Nader calls it, and as the extra-legal and “officially inaddressable” terrain of the management and government of inequality.

Looking back at the interviews I have conducted, I have to say initially that it is amongst these (for the time being) indeterminate pathmarks of such perceptions that I was radically struck by the systematic exclusion of the stories of what I have called above “primordial survival” from the narratives of migration and of the existing strategies of survival. The “actually existing” economy of legal-economic relations comprising agents of all sorts in Sultanbeyli bears the stamp of this

primordial survival as a shift towards a costly integration, the costs of which are exactly those elements to be displaced in any narrative. On the other hand, this integration necessarily brings with it a conciliatory framework for the legal and economic existence of the subject, thereby harmonizing Law with economy.

The sense I have taken from my interviews and talks is that, the excluded (non)narrative of the primordial survival ineluctably pertains to the gestural (thus in-addressable and consequently self-erasing) formation of a new and locally defined ethos of legal-economic conciliation, organically permeating the lives of everybody living in Sultanbeyli in its utmost inorganicity and urbanicity. An ethos that is flourishing as an idiomatical response to the crack in the socio-political universe of the rule of law... The concept of “idiom” I invoke here, as I take it from Şerif Mardin (1990), is radically reminiscent of what Wittgenstein had called a “language game”: it is both a grammatical structure with rules and pre-set “rule-following activities” and also a contingent series of performative signs, the instantaneous “narrative” juxtaposition of which form different localized constellations, regulating the peculiar and particular transaction at hand through instantaneous communicative means. Yet, once this ethos starts to function, it in a way erases itself in its performative reality and retrospectively posits itself as a neutral and natural reality of life — of the cruel city. Can we conceive of this social and discursive production of the “always-alreadiness” of a given economy of relations (the “historicity” of which was optically and necessarily displaced by the bearers of these relations in their accounts of their selves) irrespective of the state’s practical legal-economic daily reality in general? I believe that the self-positing and self-sublimating normative gesture of the sovereign law that decides on the exception is unevenly repeated in this “idiomatic-governmental” regime as a “betrayal” provided that we evoke the historical knowledge Benjamin mentions in the Theses.

I want to see on the grassroots how this normality of the state of exception is lived, experienced. I want to see this routine paradigm of government that routinizes states of exception in the anthropological micro-level of transactions between real agents living in a Turkish slum, Sultanbeyli, an outer district of Istanbul. These agents, whom I saw, spoke to, conversated, dined, debated and inquired with, taught by, etc. — they experience what we scholars easily pronounce in our lips in very different life-terms. Therefore, let me pass onto the historico-ethnographic part of my paper that will present my humble encounter with their experiences.

A common theme among anthropological studies on migration and poverty is the nearly structural, not the least essential displacement of the period of “primordial survival” in the accounts and narratives of (the primordial pre-history of) migration. The new urbans are in an utmost alienation from the sheer “reality” of the urban, which parametrically surrounds, circumscribes, liquedifies and accordingly re-molds their lives, permeating their sense of dislocation through and through, and, stands as the mirror of their new alien selves in their uprootal, i.e. as the alien universe of their new alien being, inasmuch as they are immersed in this new universe.

The golden city, hundreds of kilometers away, utmostly intimate in its sheer awayness, was their would-be “true homes”. Yet, it became alien to the extent that it became close and intimate in reality. The initial period of survival in the city is the bitter point of spatial self-alienation and, not the least, serves as the process of re-formation of the self as a non-organic relational will to survive – a transformation towards the sheer will to be... to remain... Alas, some could not. Alas, some could.

Sultanbeyli, associated with images of overt and hostile religiosity in our cognitive map of representations of the spatial configuration of Istanbul, is weaved along such narratives. These narratives sometimes address and sometimes displace

the course of life since the “formative” period of migration, i.e. 1985-1990. They are narratives of transformation, of building, of constructing, of forming, of molding, of remembering, of forgetting, of differing, of equalizing, of segregating, of castigating, of rising, of developing, of failing, of modernizing, of opening, of moving onwards... I have been there many times, listening to such narratives in various vicissitudes. I have spoken with children and old men in the mosques, the *esnaf* in their stores, officials of various sorts behind dusty “official” tables, ate in restaurants and “*çiğir-büfe*”s, bought clothes, been to the barber and asked sometimes about migration, religion and change, sometimes about the government, laws, cadastration and the municipality, sometimes about family, inflation, jobs, construction business, children . . . I have been told many narratives, sometimes with anger, sometimes with hope. Yet, I have to admit: I have waited for cracks in the “discourse”, lurking behind the sometimes vehement, sometimes lax voice tones and expected (in vain) for overt religious and/or political hostility (of any kind) to erupt. I will not deny that in my very urge to listen, I had failed from the very outset. I rethought all my material along the lines of this failure and I am writing this paper still following that trail. No more trying to extract traces of “political agency” and instead following breathe of the sheer will to be. To remain. Political existence started there.

What struck me most in my interviews and talks with experts and representatives of the municipality, officials of the District Population Office, “*muhtar*”s and local townsmen, was the optical displacement of this period of “primordial survival” after migration. The field study I had in mind was a state ethnography that would delve into the governmental and transactional reality of the legal sovereignty of the Turkish State — sovereignty as a daily life practice, or, the state in its practical relationality. I had many big visions in my mind about Islam, the

state, modernity, secularism, rule of law. I still have some of them. But after my pilot study, I can say that my concern is, to put it as bluntly as possible, the social and political perceptions of poverty and of the established property regime among the inhabitants of Sultanbeyli. I want to hypothetically ask whether and to what extent these perceptions serve (respectively in related yet different ways) as the indices of practical and reiterative discursive limits of the “governmental” and “exceptional” existence of the state’s sovereignty, which acts as the ultimate and incontestable maker, marker and protector of Law.

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integration necessarily brings with it a conciliatory framework for the legal and economic existence of the subject, thereby harmonizing Law with economy.

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Sultanbeyli is not a district inhabited by *gecekondus* – there is a very few amount of treasury land that could have been “occupied” by migrants. The land

mostly belongs to private parties. In the beginnings of the second half of the century, there were originally 104 persons sharing the land according to the data provided by the municipality. Locals say that today this number is around a thousand. The share of the land (cadastrated as “cultivation land”) belongs either to these 104 “root-shareholders” or their inheritors or those intermediate agents that have bought shares from these inheritors. In 1957 Sultanbeyli officially became a village, in 1989 a “*belde*” and in 1992 a district. At first there were two gross “*mahalle*”s (neighborhoods), but in 1993 this number quickly increased to 15 and elections were held.

The series of shifts and changes in the official status of Sultanbeyli may only faintly represent the radical transformation of the place. In between 1985 and 1990 the population of Sultanbeyli grew 22 times. At first, those places which would gradually become in 1993 the central “*mahalle*”s had been inhabited – Mehmet Akif, Abdurrahman Gazi, Hasanpaşa, Turgut Reis, Fatih, etc. The three “*muhtar*”s I have spoken to ideal-typically spoke to me throughout a cyclical, expanding and developing model of narration, in which the late-comers inhabit the outer shells of the “*mahalle*”s. They are the ones who expand the spatial limits of the district and this expansion takes place either at the expense of forests or Ömerli dam basin. Yet what does “inhabitation” mean here? How do you inhabit a “place”, a “land”, a “non-cadastrated share” as is called in the district? Does inhabitation necessarily mean “dwelling”? To what extent can you dwell on an “inorganic” and “insecure” space? How exactly do you own the land on which your home is built? Do you?

İsmet Bakır, the “*muhtar*” of the Hasanpaşa *Mahallesi* had come to Sultanbeyli from Kars (the farthest city of Turkey in the East) in 1988 and he spoke to me about the “idling of the engines” of the “construction sector” after ‘90s and told me stories

of land-inhabitation. He is in his own furniture store, sitting behind an office table and on an office chair, briefing on me about the tides of 'business'. In the late '80s and '90s, he says, there were numerous announcements in big newspapers for sales of lands in Sultanbeyli. He argues none of these houses built without cadastration are gecekondu, since he says everybody paid for the land, which initiated the construction business. He came from Kars, alone, son of a relatively well-off local tradesman with good relations to military offices, in order to open a furniture store. He thought someone had to furnish the houses being built and opened this store, made out "good money". There was a time of "formation" and "becoming", thus, when everybody built their own houses, whereby some gained expertise in meeting the needs of others. Transactions were based on the economy of this relatively developmental regime of daily lives – a life-sphere in 'construction'. But why did this process end?

As I have indicated, land transaction in the region is necessarily at the threshold of the Law – most of the houses in the district are not cadastrated. Even the municipality can't realize plans for schools, parks, recreations, etc. in the lack of a district-wide cadastration plan. This situation stops and "locks" everything, as they say in Sultanbeyli. At best, certain leading persons of the neighborhood may obtain a share of a given land belonging to a root-shareholder and thus obtain a non-cadastrated share. If the land is cadastrated (in the future) for determining the sort of property and obtaining its availability and permittal for construction, etc. then the shareholder will have a legal share of the chunk of land that is being cadastrated. Nevertheless, not even that is the case.

When I expressed my confusion about the issue, İsmet Bakır laughed, went to a closet, took a pile of files and papers and re-sat to his office chair with the air of a victorious soldier. "I had said to you that all the lands around here were just fields

of cultivation' hadn't I?" He had – and so as all the other “*muhtar*”s. Lands that are registered legally on the informational-bureaucratic network of the state as cultivation lands are full of houses, streets, street names, door numbers and street-lamps, electricity, water, phone lines – even natural gas. All registered in the municipality – and registered well. A life-sphere has been constructed over the lands of private parties, which is not even cadastrated for constructing buildings on it. The law, if it is what it is said to be, renders such a massive extra-legal cultivation of social life meaningless. Yet looking at the lives of the people living there, I come to believe that the meaning of law exists at all thanks to this extra-legal terrain beyond law. This terrain is a life-sphere, a transactional legal-economic network of relations, a life-system, a hierarchy – homes of migrants “adding up” into a common *place* for the migrants with its own socio-temporal and socio-spatial *worldliness*. Norms permeate this world through and through and the very possibility of law lies at the mercy of the locally defined *functioning* of the norm. The state is reproduced as the sublime arbiter of last resort to the mere extent that it is decomposed and re-set within complex governmental regime(s) of daily practices.

Bakır continued and said that there are not jobs around the region. The district is renowned as a “hotel”, since all the workers work in very distant quarters of the city and get back to their homes just to sleep. Most of the inhabitants were naturally construction workers in the district, building one's own house, or that of the neighbor, or that of the relative or being paid to earn one's life out of construction. The economy of relations relied on the socio-economic sublation of the legal in the utmost Hegelian sense – both sublation of the legal sovereignty of state itself, and the eradication of the sovereign power of state to protect property via a

stabilized regime of transaction. Such a sublation, nevertheless, sublimated what it sublated in the end.

There is a common uneasiness amongst the residents addressing the municipality on two opposite grounds: (i) on the one hand, they want the old order of extra-legal governmentality, which has its own norms and systematicity, whereby once people built their houses and earned their bread beyond the affects of the legal-sovereign gesture of sorting out law and economy. This is the ethos of conciliation I have mentioned above. Yet, one can hardly ignore the uncanny strategy of moving away from this very ethos that sustained the 'primordial survival'. Bakır and many people I have talked to are from the central regions of Turkey, from Trabzon, Rize, Sivas, Tokat, Gümüşhane, Bayburt, Kars, Erzurum and Erzincan – these provinces pile up into the most conservative part of Anatolia and the first generation of migrants, not the least coincidentally, came from these provinces. Thus (ii) these early residents are inclined to redress the activities of the 'primordial survival' now as a Turkish *laissez-faire* – the 'legal-sovereign' terrain of law should be set in such measures and modalities that the economic transactional activities peculiar to Sultanbeyli shall be able to flourish in the district, developing ever more. What was once normalized, construction and building, is now out of the legal-governmental terrain, they cannot build houses as they would like to – and this has nothing to do with the legal-sovereign. The laws did not change (much). On the contrary it is the modifications of the idiomatic governmental routines that over-determine the threshold of law to be determinant over daily practices. Shortly, the fact that once they were constructing and that now they do not have nothing to do with the law by itself; on the contrary, the structure of the daily routines determine in what exact ways the law will be affective.

When you displace your own “primordial survival” and temporally foreclose it from the formative memory of your ethos of social existence, then you also deny the structural difference between you and the “eastern” other, thereby attaining to a discourse of survival without the primordial strategies of survival. The problem of poverty is totally set in terms of management and government leading to a portrayal of the poor and/or of the “easterner” as a migrant rather managing life itself or (in the case of failure to manage) in need of assistance in management. This provides a governance of the migrant at the very level of representation, making possible the cynical adherence to the cliental networks of state-sponsored and thus willfully overlooked municipal governmentality of population. One may thus perfectly think that everybody has the relatively same channels of access to these networks for allocating resources and that all the Green-Card holders in fact do not need these cards – this is a displacement par excellence of the “other”’s excluded status, vitalizing the necessity to set the problem as an integrative constellation of redistribution and recognition.

The line drawn in between the past and present and hence between the early migrants and the latecomers discursively constructed here, actually posits the identity of the local dweller de facto as an anonymous “someone” a common dweller of the district like “all the rest” including Bakir, for instance, who has managed to survive and will manage to survive. The very source of the probability of a liminal confrontation in-between the non-addressed sides of a distributive hierarchy in the district is presented as the threshold to be overcome, since it stagnates the district “as a whole” – we all have the same problem, since we all survive in similar ways. This displacement is totally derivative of the neutralization of the hierarchical aspects of the legal-economic regime of transactions. All are bound by the narrator’s reality and the narrator succeeds in that only via risking this reality by introducing a

gap in it – the non-addressed period of primordial survival as the indices of structural differentiation with respect to the distribution and accumulation of resources.

There is a displacement of the excluded “other”, i.e. a structural inertia of redistribution governed in transactional terms exchanged between agents of all sorts: inhabitants, the municipality, the state institutions, the sovereign Law and the de facto idiomatic codes of communication. This displacement is not an “ideological” problem, but a narratively articulated discursive reality, which consists not only of the radical dismissal of the weak’s and the poor’s political potential for asking about the status they are driven into, but also of the crystallized transactional daily economy of practices that render the weak and the poor dependent upon what makes them weak and poor. This is done thanks to the presence of an extra-legal realm beyond the margins of rule of law that manages and governs the legal-economic practices. Law in Sultanbeyli operates on this realm and this “beyond” actually internalizes the legal-democratic routine, the “rule of law”, as a form of externalization. The presence of the law is always through the extra-legal. It is this extra-legal terrain beyond the law that abstracts and externalizes the law as an impossible possibility – the cadastration is theoretically open for implementation and the illegal may perfectly be enforced to be legalized, but practically? The law is always a threshold, an externalized internalization and inscription into the daily life thanks to the gesture of the extra-legal drawing the lines, limits, possibilities, openings and closings, i.e. an idiomatic governmentality managing the social stratification on the exact point where redistribution and recognition intersect.

Formality and informality (especially in housing) is not an either/or situation, but rather a continuous scala, with many points along it representing varying degrees of formality and informality. The scala ranges from housing that is

formal from the point of view of both private law and public law through to housing that is informal in regard to both areas of law. At the informal end of the continuum, there is usually a disjuncture between the two areas of law. In fact, it is often the inappropriateness of formal public law requirements for the housing needs of the poor that drives them to informal private law solutions. One should analyse these "housing solutions" with a view to unravelling their formal and informal elements under a common governmental scheme.

The first and most obvious element is that it is inappropriate to think of property in terms of individual full ownership, as we are generally willing to do. Property comprises a panoply of "uses" and "transmissions". Different property owners negotiate different property rights, so that the entire panoply is not necessary in every situation. Negotiation of "use" comprises basically two aspects: a right to use and a right to exclude others. The "negotiated" right to use have become increasingly individualised, and hence exclusive, over time. While residents have the most severely constrained formal capacity for transmission, informally, however, their transmission rights are extensive, with informal inheritance, rental and sale.

Such informalities are usually accepted (even supervised) by land-owners, sometimes expressly but more often tacitly, which implies the creation of new tenancies at will. New legislation either does or will grant "tenants" to do formally what they now do informally, closing up the governmental circuit of land transaction. Formal limitations are largely "negotiated" (not "ignored") for "informal rights" of rental, sale or inheritance. The predominant property regimes "in circulation" are rarely, if ever, either wholly formal or wholly informal. Formal rules are sometimes overridden, sometimes underpinned, by informal rules, and which way round it depends on the extent to which the formal rules reflect the

"governmental concerns" of the "society" in which they operate with its own blend of formality and informality.

I will pursue my argument further and say that this narration is a performative articulation of the existing "idiom" of transaction, entailing norms, behaviors, signs, adaptation, learning and application. Idiom stands right in-between Law and transactional reality of "governance", forming a narrative articulation – governance is the stuff of reality, yet it is perfectly corporeal in the norm. The non-addressal of the primordial survival in the form of an equalizing addressal is such a successful idiomatic narrative articulation of a governmental transactional regime, that it actually locks down the property regime and sustains inequality among the inhabitants. Yet, the fantasy of the "management of crisis" inherent in the very transactional routine performatively rules out possibility of drawing the line between the socio-economic strata. This management excludes the prospects of perceiving the field opened by a narrative from a non-acknowledged and indeterminate status – the narrative here captures the "listener" by the idiomatic structure of the narrative itself, though (and only through) under the semblance of an addressal that opens up a free position of addressor for the listener, where the listener is performatively denied of the possibility of addressing. The empty gesture requires a practical performative register, which is idiom.

There is a practical "idiom" of making sense of the transactional reality and its unacknowledged yet applied grammar – this "making sense" is being able to narrate it, enunciate it, articulate it, rendering it as a practice. In that sense every articulation as a re-iteration, real and practical, yet each is the means via which the iterated "framework of unwritten rules" is articulated as a grammar always-already there. There is a retrospective/reflective positioning in the re-iteration, making us forget that there is no rule or following in the junctural formation of the articulation

and this happens, I believe, thanks to the narrative plot that sets land transaction as a common idiom whereby the reality is rendered meaningful and secure for the subject to engage in the transactional reality. Hence the norm/rule is a matter of common ethos, not ethics, where ethos is a common sensibility shared through a narrative-communicative-practical idiom.

During my study I had interviewed with Ali Akgül, the “*muhtar*” of Necip Fazıl *Mahallesi*, one of the poorest parts of the district and the only “*mahalle*” lacking school. While we were sitting in the little office, a relatively young man had entered the room, greeted us and sat. From time to time he joined in the conversation and told me about the piece of land he had recently ‘bought’. His name was Mehmet Duran. The land “belonged” to a certain Bahattin, who is known for land transaction among the locals. Duran and Bahattin had made the transaction, signed the papers of future money transfers and Duran went to municipality. Unfortunately a part of the land was ‘registered’ as officially reserved for building a school and he had come to Akgül for this issue. He was a security guard for a bank, despite his weak looking posture, with a 500 million liras salary and 200 million liras rent given for the house. He did not look very anxious about the issue. He neither looked like someone deceived, nor like someone whose landownership is at stake. He had recently come from the municipality and learned about the situation a few hours ago – he looked not only calm, but even very content and was making jokes.

While listening to their talks about the issue, the narrative structure of which shifted constantly from addressing to me without even looking at me to inversely addressing each other while looking at me about the appropriate means of dealing with the issue, I had the sense of being intermingled in, yet left out of a narrative-communicative structure. Now I prefer to use the term “grammar” instead of “structure” and attribute the fact that I was “left out” to the narrative structure of

their rule-following activities as articulations. I personally did not own any land there or live there, therefore lacking the particular instance through which the idiom I want to get into will form an articulation. In that sense, the transaction regime irreducible to any concern for the letter of the Law, was actually derivative of a conciliatory ethos, idiomatically making narrativization and plotting possible on the practical-performative-articulative reality of the inhabitants. Agents' sense of security and contentness relied on a particular constellation of legal and economic transactions peculiar to the ethos grammatically structuring the daily legal-economic practices through a narrative-communicative idiom. Akgül did not even listen to Duran carefully – they were communicating in a pattern unknown to me in the form of a citation out of an “index of social relations”, thus excluding “in form” any sense of Foucauldian “articulation” and juxtaposition, yet reminiscent of what Wittgenstein called a “language game”. They communicated idiomatically, pace Mardin, on a different level from me.

What I argue is that this narrative setting of the practice in an idiom is what produces a retrospective effect of sustaining the “index of social relations”, the fantasy, as always-already there, not the practical result of a social process during which inequality and stratification occurred. Duran totally lives by this regime and pays an important amount of money (so vital for his survival) from his salary for attaining a property, which has no legal basis on any grounds and which, moreover, may possibly not even pass to his hands. What else can he do other than totally relying on the governmental transactional economy of relations sponsored by the municipality and the private parties that act on the threshold of law? Idiom locks down the fantasy as the indices of practice.

What else can he do other than totally relying on the governmental transactional economy of relations sponsored by the municipality and the private parties that act on the threshold of law?

Here we do not have a 'state' vs. 'individual citizen' relationship – the meanings of property, law, state and security are totally re-created along with a particular ethos peculiar to the transactional economy under question. This idiomatic governmental regime, on the other hand, due to the temporal threshold of law drawn between the past and the present of Sultanbeyli, is obviously stratified a propos of Duran's (and not the least, Akgül's) necessary reliance on the prospects of the issue to be resolved anyway. While the same ethos and the same regime once mobilized the district and made the first generation of migration survive, as well as provided present motives for 'moving on' along the locally re-set motifs of *laissez-faire a-la Dogru*, it today serves as the very stuff of reality fundamentally penetrating each and every sense of survival, despite the very fact that such a survival locks down the subject into these networks without granting the 'primordial formative advantages' once existed in the district. The structural inequality of distribution is set thus in such a way that while the strong has every kind of real- incentives for moving on along the lines of existing ethos of legal-economic transactions, the weak has no option other than sticking to the stratified and segregating logic of the idiomatically governmental economic regime. Inequality is solidified and incentives for re-distribution are diminishing. When put in these terms, i.e. in terms of idiom, pace Mardin, and ethos, pace Foucault, naturalizing the ideals for another world via a radical mis-representation of the hierarchical stratification structuring all the socio-economic relations in Sultanbeyli through an optical displacement of the "primordial survival", the question of "recognition" attains a radically new light in relation to social representation in the imaginary.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Death erases all distinctions, but preference is always related to distinctions; yet the way to life and to the eternal goes through death and through the extinction of distinctions. Therefore only love to one's neighbour truly leads to life... before God there is no distinction. But when you love your neighbour, then you are like unto God. Therefore go and do likewise. Forsake all distinctions so that you can love your neighbour. Alas, perhaps it is not necessary to say this to you at all³⁷.

Søren Kierkegaard

And if a stranger [ger] sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger [ger] that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born [ezrach] among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself [v'ahavta lo kimokha]; for ye were strangers [gerim] in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19: 33-4

To sum up my basic argument, there is a “mis-recognition of mis-recognition” in Sultanbeyli, which naturalizes and neutralizes structural inequality by portraying the self and the other along the same lines of survival. What does that mean? When you displace and mis-recognize your own “primordial survival” and temporally foreclose it from the formative memory of your ethos of social existence, then you also deny the structural difference between you and the ‘eastern’ other, thereby attaining to a discourse of survival without the primordial strategies of survival. The problem of poverty is totally set in terms of management and government leading to a portrayal of the poor and/or of the ‘easterner’ as a migrant rather managing life itself. This provides a governance of the migrant at the very level of representation, making possible the cynical adherence to the cliental networks of state-sponsored

³⁷ Kierkegaard (1964: 74-75).

and thus willfully overlooked municipal governmentality of population. One may thus perfectly think that everybody has the relatively same channels of access to these networks for allocating resources and that all the Green Card holders in fact do not need these cards – this is a misrecognition of the ‘other’s excluded status, vitalizing the necessity to set the problem as an integrative constellation of redistribution and recognition.

Thus, this is what I have found in Sultanbeyli: the misrecognition of misrecognition among the inhabitants of Sultanbeyli is a misrecognition of the excluded ‘other’ as a structural inertia of redistribution. This misrecognition is not an ‘ideological’ problem, but a discursive reality, which consists not only of the radical dismissal of the weak’s and the poor’s political potential for asking for the status they are driven into, but also of the crystallized transactional daily economy of practices that renders the weak and the poor dependent upon what makes them weak and poor. This is done thanks to the presence of an extra-legal realm beyond the margins of *civitas* that manages and governs the legal-economic practices. Law in Sultanbeyli operates on this realm and this ‘beyond’ actually internalizes the legal-democratic routine, the ‘rule of law’, as a form of externalization. The presence of the law is always through the extra-legal. It is this extra-legal terrain beyond the law that abstracts and externalizes the law as an impossible possibility – the cadastration is theoretically open for implementation and the illegal may perfectly be enforced to be legalized, but practically? The law is always a threshold, an externalized internalization and inscription into the daily life thanks to the gesture of the extra-legal drawing the lines, limits, possibilities, openings and closings, i.e. an idiomatic governmentality managing the social stratification on the exact point where distribution and recognition intersect.

APPENDIX³⁸

Is then *capital* the true Subject/Substance? Yes and no: for Marx, this self-engendering circular movement is —to put it in Freudian terms— precisely the capitalist “unconscious fantasy” which parasitizes upon the proletariat as the “pure substanceless subjectivity”; for this reason, the capital’s speculative self-generating dance has a limit, and it brings about the conditions of its own collapse. This insight allows us to solve the key interpretive problem of the above quote³⁹: how are we to read its first three words, “*in truth, however*”? First, of course, they imply that this truth has to be asserted against some false appearance or experience: the everyday experience that the ultimate goal of the capital’s circulation is still the satisfaction of human needs, that capital is just a means to bring about this satisfaction in a more efficient way. However, this “truth” is *not* the *reality* of capitalism: in *reality*, capital does not engender itself, but exploits the worker’s surplus-value. There is thus a necessary third level to be added to the simple opposition of subjective experience (of capital as a simple means of efficiently satisfying people’s needs) and objective social reality (of exploitation): the “objective deception”, the disavowed “unconscious” fantasy (of the mysterious self-generating circular movement of the capital), which is the *truth* (although not the *reality*) of the capitalist process. Again, quote Lacan, truth has the structure of a fiction: the only way to formulate the truth of the capital is to render this fiction of its “immaculate” self-generating movement. And this insight also allows us to locate the weakness of the above-mentioned “deconstructionist” appropriation of Marx’s analysis of capitalism: although it emphasizes the endless process of deferral which characterizes this movement, as well as its fundamental inconclusiveness, its self-blockade, the “deconstructionist”

³⁸ Excerpt from Žižek (2006a).

³⁹ “In truth, however, value is here [in capital] the active factor in a process, in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it at the same time changes in magnitude, differentiates itself by throwing off surplus-value from itself; the original value, in other words, expands spontaneously. For the movement, in the course of which it adds surplus-value, is its own movement, its expansion, therefore, is automatic expansion. Because it is value, it has acquired the occult quality of being able to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or, at the least, lays golden eggs”, Karl Marx, “The General Formula for Capital” [*Capital*, Chapter IV], in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3*, Richard Dixon et al., translators, International Publishers: 1975, p. 161.

retelling still describes the *fantasy* of the capital—it describes what individuals believe, although they don't know it.

This shift from goal-oriented stance of consumption towards the properly capitalist stance of self-propelling circulation allows us to locate *desire* and *drive* with regard to capitalism. Following Jacques-Alain Miller, a distinction has to be introduced here between *lack* and *hole*: lack is spatial, designating a void *within* a space, while hole is more radical, it designates the point at which this spatial order itself breaks down (as in the “black hole” in physics). Therein resides the difference between desire and drive: desire is grounded in its constitutive lack, while drive circulates around a hole, a gap in the order of being. In other words, the circular movement of drive obeys the weird logic of the curved space in which the shortest distance between the two points is not a straight line, but a curve: drive “knows” that the shortest way to attain its aim is to circulate around its goal-object. At the immediate level of addressing individuals, capitalism of course interpellates them as consumers, as subjects of desires, soliciting in them ever new perverse and excessive desires (for which it offers products to satisfy them); furthermore, it obviously also manipulates the “desire to desire”, celebrating the very desire to desire ever new objects and modes of pleasure. However, even if it already manipulates desire in a way which takes into account the fact that the most elementary desire is the desire to reproduce itself as desire (and not to find satisfaction), at this level, we do not yet reach drive. Drive inheres to capitalism at a more fundamental, systemic, level: drive is that which propels the entire capitalist machinery, it is the impersonal compulsion to engage in the endless circular movement of expanded self-reproduction. We enter the mode of drive the moment the circulation of money as capital becomes “an end in itself, for the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has therefore no limits”. (One should bear in mind here Lacan's well-known distinction between the *aim* and the *goal* of drive: while the goal is the object around which drive circulates, its (true) aim is the endless continuation of this circulation as such.) The capitalist drive thus belongs to no definite individual—it is rather that, those individuals who act as direct “agents” of the capital (capitalists themselves, top managers) have to display it.

[Jacques-Alain] Miller recently proposed a Benjaminian distinction between “constituted anxiety” and “constituent anxiety”, which is crucial with regard to the shift from desire to drive: while the first one designated the standard notion of the terrifying and fascinating abyss of anxiety which haunts us, its infernal circle which threatens to draw us in, *the second one stands for the “pure” confrontation with objet petit a as constituted in its very loss*. Miller is right to emphasize here two features: the difference which separates *constituted* from *constituent* anxiety concerns the status of the object with regard to fantasy. In a case of constituted anxiety, the object dwells within the confines of a fantasy, while we only get the constituent anxiety when the subject “traverses the fantasy” and confronts the void, the gap, filled up by the fantasmatic object - as Mallarmé put it in the famous bracketed last two lines of his “Sonnet en - yx”, *objet a is ce seul objet dont le Néant s’honore* /this sole object with which Nothing is honoured/”.

Clear and convincing as it is, Miller’s formula misses the true paradox or, rather, ambiguity of *objet a*: when he defines *objet a* as the object which overlaps with its loss, which emerges at the very moment of its loss (so that all its fantasmatic incarnations, from breasts to voice and gaze, are metonymic figurations of the void, of nothing), he remains within the horizon of desire — the true object-cause of desire is the void filled in by its fantasmatic incarnations. While, as Lacan emphasizes, *objet a* is also the object of drive, the relationship is here thoroughly different: although, in both cases, the link between object and loss is crucial, in the case of *objet a* as the object-cause of *desire*, we have an object which is originally lost, which coincides with its own loss, which emerges as lost, while, in the case of *objet a* as the object of *drive*, the “object” is *directly the loss itself* — in the shift from desire to drive, we pass from the lost object to *loss itself as an object*. That is to say, the weird movement called “drive” is not driven by the “impossible” quest for the lost object; it is a push to directly enact the “loss” —the gap, cut, distance— itself. There is thus a *double* distinction to be drawn here: not only between *objet a* in its fantasmatic and post-fantasmatic status, but also, within this post-fantasmatic domain itself, between the lost object-cause of desire and the object-loss of drive.

This is why one should not confuse death drive with the so-called “nirvana principle”, the trust towards destruction or self-obliteration: the Freudian death drive has nothing whatsoever to do with the craving for self-annihilation, for the

return to the inorganic absence of any life-tension; it is, on the contrary, the very opposite of dying — [it is] a name for the “undead” eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain. The paradox of the Freudian “death drive” is therefore that it is Freud’s name for its very opposite, for the way immortality appears within psychoanalysis, for an uncanny *excess* of life, for an “undead” urge which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death, of generation and corruption. The ultimate lesson of psychoanalysis is that human life is never “just life”: humans are not simply alive, they are possessed by the strange drive to enjoy life in excess, passionately attached to a surplus which sticks out and derails the ordinary run of things.

What this means is that it is wrong to claim that the “pure” death drive would have been the impossible “total” will to (self-)destruction, the ecstatic self-annihilation in which the subject would have rejoined the fullness of the maternal Thing, but that this will is not realizable, that it gets blocked, stuck to a “partial object”. Such a notion retranslates death drive into the terms of desire and its lost object: it is in desire that the positive object is a metonymic stand-in for the void of the impossible Thing; it is in desire that the aspiration to fullness is transferred to partial objects - this is what Lacan called the metonymy of desire. One has to be very precise here if we are not to miss Lacan’s point (and thereby confuse desire and drive): drive is not an infinite longing for the Thing which gets fixated onto a partial object — “drive” is this fixation itself in which resides the “death” dimension of every drive. Drive is not a universal thrust (towards the incestuous Thing) braked and broken up, it is this brake itself, a brake on instinct, its “stuckness”, as Eric Santner would have put it. The elementary matrix of drive is *not* that of transcending all particular objects towards the void of the Thing (which is then accessible only in its metonymic stand-in), but that of our libido getting “stuck” onto a particular object, condemned to circulate around it forever.

The basic paradox here is that the specifically human dimension —drive as opposed to instinct— emerges precisely when what was originally a mere by-product is elevated into an autonomous aim: man is not more “reflexive”; on the contrary, man perceives as a direct goal what, for an animal, has no intrinsic value. In short, the zero-degree of “humanization” is not a further “mediation” of animal activity, its re-inscription as a subordinated moment of a higher totality (say, we eat

and procreate in order to develop higher spiritual potentials), but the radical narrowing of focus, the elevation of a minor activity into an end-in-itself. We become “humans” when we get caught into a closed, self-propelling loop of repeating the same gesture and finding satisfaction in it.

We all recall one of the archetypal scenes from cartoons: while dancing, the cat jumps up into the air and turns around its own axis; however, instead of falling back down towards the earth’s surface in accordance with the normal laws of gravity, it remains for some time suspended in the air, turning around in the levitated position as if caught in a loop of time, repeating the same circular movement on and on. (One also finds the same shot in some musical comedies which make use of the elements of slapstick: when a dancer turns around him- or herself in the air, s/he remains up there a little bit too long, as if, for a short period of time, s/he succeeded in suspending the law of gravity. And, effectively, is such an effect not the ultimate goal of the art of dancing?) In such moments, the “normal” run of things, the “normal” process of being caught in the imbecilic inertia of material reality, is for a brief moment suspended; we enter the magical domain of a suspended animation, of a kind of ethereal rotation which, as it were, sustains itself, hanging in the air like Baron Munchhausen who raised himself from the swamp by grabbing his own hair and pulling himself up. This rotary movement, in which the linear progress of time is suspended in a repetitive loop, is *drive* at its most elementary. This, again, is “humanization” at its zero-level: this self-propelling loop which suspends/disrupts linear temporal enchainment. This shift from desire to drive is crucial if one is to grasp properly the crux of the “minimal difference”: at its most fundamental, the minimal difference is not the unfathomable X which elevates an ordinary object into an object of desire, but, rather, the inner torsion which curves the libidinal space and thus transforms instinct into drive.

Consequently, the concept of drive makes the alternative “either burned by the Thing or maintaining a distance” false: in a drive, the “thing itself” is a circulation around the void (or, rather, hole, not void). To put it even more pointedly, the object of drive is not related to the Thing as a filler of its void: drive is literally a counter-movement to desire, it does not strive towards impossible fullness and, being forced to renounce it, gets stuck onto a partial object as its remainder—drive is quite literally the very “drive” to *break* the All of continuity in which we are embedded, to

introduce a radical imbalance into it, and the difference between drive and desire is precisely that, in desire, this cut, this fixation onto a partial object, is as it were “transcendentalized”, transposed into a stand-in for the void of the Thing.

This is also how we should read Lacan’s thesis on the “satisfaction of drives”: a drive does not bring satisfaction because its object is a stand-in for the Thing, but because a drive, as it were, turns failure into triumph—in it, the very failure to reach its goal, the repetition of this failure, the endless circulation around the object, generates a satisfaction of its own. As Lacan put it, the true aim of a drive is not to reach its goal, but to circulate endlessly around it. In the well-known vulgar joke about a fool having intercourse for the first time, the girl has to tell him exactly what to do: “See this hole between my legs? Put it in here. Now push it deep. Now pull it out. Push it in, pull it out, push it in, pull it out. . . .” “Now wait a minute”, the fool interrupts her, “make up your mind! In or out?” What the fool misses is precisely the structure of a drive which gets its satisfaction from the indecision itself, from repeated oscillation (Žižek 2006a: 61-64).

[. . .]

What we find in Marx is not only the “reduction” of ideology to an economic base, and within this base, of exchange to production, but a much more ambiguous and mysterious phenomenon of “commodity fetishism”, which designates *a kind of proto-ideology* inherent to the reality of the “economic base” itself. Freud accomplishes a strictly analogous breakthrough with regard to the paradoxical status of fantasy: the ontological paradox, even scandal, of the notion of fantasy lies in the fact that it subverts the standard opposition of “subjective” and “objective”: of course fantasy is by definition not “objective” (in the naïve sense of “existing independently of the subject’s perceptions”); however it is not “subjective” (in the sense of being reducible to the subject’s consciously experienced intuitions) either. Fantasy, rather, belongs to the “bizarre category of the objectively subjective—the way things actually, objectively seem to you even if they don’t seem that way to you” (as Dennett put it in his acerbic critical remark against the notion of *qualia* [direct immediate sensations]). When, for example, we claim that someone who is consciously well disposed toward Jews nonetheless harbors profound anti-Semitic prejudices of which he is consciously aware, are we not claiming that (insofar as these prejudices do not reflect the way Jews really are, but the way they appear to him) he is not

aware of how Jews really seem to him? Or, to put the same paradox in a different way, the fundamental fantasy is constitutive of (our approach to) reality (“everything we are allowed to approach by way of reality remains rooted in fantasy”), yet, for that very reason, its direct assuming or actualization cannot fail to give rise to catastrophic consequences: “If what [subjects] long for the most intensely in their fantasies is presented to them in reality, they nonetheless flee from it”. As the common wisdom puts it: a nightmare is a dream come true.

Apropos of commodity fetishism, Marx himself uses the term “objectively necessary appearance”. This difference between the two appearances (the way things *really* appear to us versus the way they *appear to* appear to us) is linked to the structure of the well-known Freudian joke about a Jew who complains to his friend: “Why are you telling me that you are going to Lemberg when you are really going to Lemberg?”: for instance, in the case of commodity fetishism, when I immediately perceive money as just a knot of social relations, not any kind of magical object, and I treat it like a fetish only in my practice, so that the site of fetishism is my actual social practice, I could in effect be upbraided: “Why are saying that money is just a knot of social relations, when money really *is* just a knot of social relations?”

Jean Laplanche wrote about the hysteric’s “primordial lie” which articulates the original fantasy: “the term ‘*proton pseudos*’ aims at something different from a subjective lie; it describes a kind of passage from the subjective to the founding—even, one could say, to the transcendental; in any case, a kind of objective lie, inscribed into the facts”. Is this not also the status of Marxian commodity fetishism?—not simply a subjective illusion, but an “objective” illusion, an illusion inscribed into the facts (social reality) themselves. Let us read carefully the famous opening sentences of Chapter I of *Capital*: “A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties”. Kojin Karatani is right to link this passage to the starting point of the Marxian critique, the famous line from 1843 about how “the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism”: with it, the circle is, in a way, closed upon itself, that is to say, at the very bottom of the critique of actual life (of the economic process), we again encounter the theological dimension inscribed in social reality itself. Karatani is referring here to the Freudian notion of drive (*Trieb*) as opposed to the multitudes of human

desires: capitalism is grounded in the Real of a certain quasi-theological impersonal “drive”, the drive to reproduce and grow, to expand and accumulate profit.

This is also one way of specifying the meaning of Lacan’s assertion of the subject’s constitutive “decenterment”: its point is not that my subjective experience is regulated by objective unconscious mechanisms which are “decentered” with regard to my self-experience and, as such, beyond my control (a point asserted by every materialist), but, rather, something much more unsettling—I am deprived of even my most intimate “subjective” experience, the way things “really seem to me”, that of the fundamental fantasy that constitutes and guarantees the core of my being, since I can never consciously experience it and assume it. . . According to the standard view, the dimension that is constitutive of subjectivity is that of phenomenal (self-)experience—I am a subject the moment I can say to myself: “No matter what unknown mechanism governs my acts, perceptions and thoughts, nobody can take from me what I see and feel now”. For example, when I am passionately in love, and a biochemist informs me that all my intense sentiments are merely the result of biochemical processes in my body, I can answer him by clinging to the appearance: “All that you are saying may be true; nonetheless, nothing can take from me the intensity of the passion I am now experiencing. . . .” Lacan’s point, however, is that the psychoanalyst is the one who, precisely, *can* take this from the subject—that is to say, his ultimate aim is to deprive the subject of the very fundamental fantasy that regulates the universe of his (self-)experience.

The Freudian “subject of the Unconscious” emerges only when a key aspect of the subject’s phenomenal (self-)experience (his “fundamental fantasy”) becomes inaccessible to him, that is, is “primordially repressed”. At its most radical, the Unconscious is the inaccessible phenomenon, not the objective mechanism that regulates my phenomenal experience. So, in contrast to the commonplace that we are dealing with a subject the moment an entity displays signs of “inner life”, that is, of a fantasmatic self-experience that cannot be reduced to external behavior, we should claim that what characterizes human subjectivity proper is, rather, the gap that separates the two: the fact that fantasy, at its most elementary, becomes inaccessible to the subject; it is this inaccessibility that makes the subject “empty”. We thus obtain a relationship that totally subverts the standard notion of the subject who directly experiences himself, his “inner states”: an “impossible”

relationship between the empty, non-phenomenal subject and the phenomena that remain inaccessible to the subject. When David Chalmers opposed phenomenal and psychological concepts of the mind (conscious awareness/experience, and what the mind actually does), he cites the Freudian Unconscious as the quintessential case of psychological mind external to the phenomenal mind: what Freud describes as the work of the Unconscious is a complex network of mental causality and behavioral control which takes place “on the other scene”, without being experienced. However, is it really like that? Is not the status of the unconscious fantasy nonetheless, in an unprecedented sense, phenomenal? Is not this the ultimate paradox of the Freudian Unconscious—that it designates the way things “really appear” to us, beyond their conscious appearance? Far from being superseded by the later brain-sciences decenterment, Freudian decenterment is thus much more unsettling and radical than the later one, which remains within the confines of a simple naturalization: it opens up a new domain of weird “asubjective phenomena”, of appearances with no subject to whom they can appear: it is only here that the subject is “no longer a master in his own house” — in the house of his self-appearances themselves (Žižek 2006a: 270-272).

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