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Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde: Dialogic Speech as Subaltern Insurgency

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisors:

Jeannette Okur

Kristin Brustad

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by

Matthew Latham Chovanec, B.A.

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Dedication

I am a four-winged bird

Two wings to you

The other two

Also to you

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Nora Chovanec.

Abstract

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Matthew Latham Chovanec, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

Supervisors: Jeannette Okur and Kristin Brustad

This paper will argue that Orhan Kemal's 1954 novel, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*, uses a predominance of dialogic speech as a narratological strategy which allows for the representation (*Darstellung*) of subaltern voices rather than a speaking on their behalf (*Vertretung*). Countering Spivak's claim that the intellectual erases the subaltern's speech through his/her attempts to represent it, Orhan Kemal is able to portray rural Anatolia because dialogic speech is irreducibly indexical to the sociolinguistic complexities and political contestations of the social world. In addition, subaltern consciousness will be shown to emerge intersubjectively through dialogue rather than as a effect of discrete class positions or political revelations. This paper will perform a sociolinguistic analysis of the speech found in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* to show how individuals in conversational speech perform and contest identities, how they express and agree upon knowledge, and how the indeterminacy and open-ended nature of their speech holds open a space against the enclosing pressure for it to become a "text-for-knowledge".

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Representing the Subaltern in the Turkish Village Novel.....	4
1.1 The Political Legacy of the Turkish Village Novel.....	4
1.2 Orhan Kemal’s Credentials as Representative of the Subaltern	6
1.3 Can the Anatolian Subaltern Speak?.....	8
Constructing the Social World Through Dialogic Speech	11
2.1 The Indexical Orders of Dialogic Speech	11
2.2 Challenging Ideologies Through Language.....	22
2.3 Gender Relations Through Verbal Negotiations	27
Advancing Knowledge Through Intersubjective Stancetaking	33
3.1 Subaltern Knowledge as it is Constructed Intersubjectively	33
3.2 Urban Knowledge as Practical Consciousness Rather than Revelation	40
3.3 Performing Epistemological Transformations	46
Conclusion: Subaltern and Narratological Silences.....	52
Bibliography	56

Introduction

For a work of socialist realism concerned with the daily struggles of rural migrant laborers in Turkey, the 1954 novel *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (Upon Blessed Earth) by Orhan Kemal does remarkably little soliloquizing. In fact, the narrator does very little speaking at all. Although written using an omniscient third-person perspective, the narrative is largely constructed via dialogue between the three main protagonists and their interactions with characters representing a cross-section of Anatolian society. Rather than acting as mouthpieces for socialist ideology, Incurable Yusuf, Beardless Hasan, and Ali the Wrestler seemingly discuss whatever comes to their minds. Throughout the novel, the narrator rarely interrupts their continuous conversation, other than to identify which character is speaking. And when the villager himself speaks, Kemal seems to have made an earnest attempt to transcribe the speech patterns of rural Anatolia as authentically as possible. So authentically in fact, that their speech poses a challenge for the non-local reader due to the many phonetic and morphological changes, as well as an unfamiliar repertoire of idiomatic and cultural allusions. The villagers' conversations are also often marked by repetition, interjections, and profanity. However, despite having its narration be in the hands (or mouths) of such desultory protagonists, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* has long been praised by critics as a great work of politically committed literature, which succeeds

in representing the plight of the Turkish rural laborer in his/her transition to the capitalist system¹.

But without a purposeful or centered narrative voice, how is this representation possible? Typical Turkish novels from this period set in the countryside channeled the author's polemics on rural life through a stock character stand-in, be they a melodramatic intellectual or a mythologized local. But in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*, the novel's three protagonists do not reflect any level of consciousness beyond their immediate circumstances. Nor does Orhan Kemal employ easily decipherable motifs, chosen from a repertoire of static socialist realist dioramas². Criticized for its lack of a clear plot structure by critics such as Mehmet Ergün³, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*'s is stubbornly resistant to interpretation as political allegory. The leftist critic Asım Bezirci called it unfocused, random, and technically weak⁴. It seems strange to classify the novel as a work of socialist realism at all when it seems less concerned with presenting a heroic socialist teleology than it does with recording casual conversations about gambling and sex.

This paper will argue that *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* uses an effective strategy of representation: dialogic speech. As a narratological tool, dialogic speech presents indi-

¹Moran, Berna. "Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde Köylü Şehirli Çatışması." *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış II*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990. N. pg. 36.

² Clark, Katerina. "The Mutability of the Canon: Socialist Realism and Chingiz Aitmatov's I Dol'she Veka Dlitia Den" *Slavic Review* 43.4 (1984): 573. Web.

³ Ergün, Mehmet. "Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde." *Yen Ortam* [İstanbul] 22 July 1973: 7.

⁴ Bezirci, Asım. "Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde." *Orhan Kemal*. İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1984. N. Print.

viduals who are not reducible to idealized political subjects, or to groups whose ‘true’ consciousness or objective interests can be spoken for. Orhan Kemal is distinguished among village novelists, and Turkish writers more broadly, by his expert use of colloquial language and realistic dialogue. This distinction ends up being more than an eccentricity of style, and is, in fact, an effective approach to fictional representation. Orhan Kemal is able to portray rural Anatolia because dialogic speech is irreducibly indexical to the sociolinguistic complexities and political contestations of the social world. In addition, subaltern consciousness emerges intersubjectively through dialogue rather than as a effect of discrete class positions or political revelations. This paper will perform a sociolinguistic analysis of the speech found in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* to show how individuals in conversational speech perform and contest identities, how they express and agree upon knowledge, and how the indeterminacy and open-ended nature of their speech holds open a space against the enclosing pressure for it to become a “text-for-knowledge”.

Representing the Subaltern in the Turkish Village Novel

1.1 The Political Legacy of the Turkish Village Novel

The Turkish village novel forms a canonical body of literature which began in the middle of the 20th century, as the problematic of Turkish literature turned away from questioning the location of national identity between East and West, and began to focus on the rural question — the problems brought about by the rapid integration of the countryside into the national economy⁵. The catalyst for this movement has often been attributed to the Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri), which were founded by the İnönü administration in 1940 as a way to increase the presence of schools in rural republican Turkey with the goal of modernizing/westernizing rural citizens. Teachers were sent into villages by the government to start schools and to promote literacy and modern agricultural practices. Many of those teachers and intellectuals who had worked in these institutes would eventually write fictional accounts of their experiences. Being born out of this movement, Turkish village novels reflect this didactic heritage. In almost all Turkish village novels, a figural perspective organizes the narrative. Starting as early as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Yaban* (1932) and continuing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, village novels featured the character of the enlightened outsider, usually a schoolteacher or doctor, who enters the village and explains its 'backward' culture to metropolitan audiences.

⁵ Moran, Berna, Nazan Aksoy, and Oya Berk. *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış II*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990. Print.

At the same time, the narrator hopes to enlighten villagers and to bring them into the modern world as represented by the republican government. The outsider's narratological stance is always set apart from the villager and his worldview, whether it takes a position of ironic superiority, as in the work of Refik Halit, or plays the role of the satirical observer, as in *Bizim Köy* (1950) by Mahmut Makal. Most often, the protagonist-narrator simply represents the voice of knowledge and enlightenment⁶. The outsider is at the same time often a stand-in for the author himself, whose political or ethical agenda is almost always synonymous with the protagonist's⁷. Villagers, on the other hand, are only represented through the prism of these central characters' concerns.

Even where there is not the enlightened outsider looking on, native village characters in these novels are still often portrayed in such a way as to serve as the writer's ideological or artistic objective. In Sabahattin Ali's *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* (1937), for example, the hero is an orphan from the countryside who stands for the figure of the noble savage, succumbing to the corruption and injustice of civilized society⁸. In Yaşar Kemal's trilogy, villagers take on mythological dimensions through the author's use of lyrical dialogue, poetic imagery, and supernatural terms to achieve heightened drama. Writers like Yaşar

⁶ Dino, Guzine, and Joan Grimbert. "The Turkish Peasant Novel, or the Anatolian Theme." *World Literature Today* 60.2 (1986): 266. Web.

⁷ Güzine Dino argues, for example, that in *Yaban*, the antagonism between the narrator and the village world around him can be best be accounted for by the author's own sense of cosmopolitan guilt. The author was aware that he lacked basic knowledge about the countryside to which the attentions of a growing national ideology was quickly turning.

⁸ Moran, Berna. "Soylu Vaşhi Olarak Kuyucaklı Yusuf." *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış II*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990. N. pag. Print.

Kemal fed urbanites' fascination with local folklore and traditions. Still, in each of these works, authorial perspective, as represented by narrative structure and tone, has a distorting effect on the image of the villager.

Beyond being a source for authentic folk culture, rural Turkey was increasingly focused on by authors, especially those on the left, because of their concerns for the inequalities and injustices brought about by economic transformations and large-scale immigration to urban centers throughout the 1950s. Issues of social justice and representations of rural concerns became prominent in village novels written by writers on the left critical of state projects. In either case, the political interests for a narrative voice in village novels were many, and the temptation to speak over the voices of villagers on their behalf was great. Whether exoticizing or extolling, displaying or defending, the opportunity for villagers to speak for themselves in the village novel was often overlooked in authors' own pursuit of their representation.

1.2 Orhan Kemal Credentials as Representative of the Subaltern

Shouldn't this be the case as well for Orhan Kemal and his novel *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*? Orhan Kemal was not a state-employed village novelist and *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* does not take place in a village per se. However, his work is implicated in the project of literary representations of the Turkish countryside. The novel tells the story of three friends who migrate from their native village to work in a series of jobs

in Adana's agricultural economy. This includes working in a cotton-sorting factory and on a team of day laborers operating a haymaker. Along the way, Beardless Hasan falls ill from working next to an open window in the middle of winter; Ali the Wrestler falls prey to the temptations of women and the ruthless greed of his bosses; and in the end only In-corrigible Yusuf is able to return to the village, carrying with him his long sought-after gas stove. Along the way, the characters deal with the daily drudgery of manual labor, suffer from the exploitation and violence from bosses and foremen, and try to make use of their free time to pursue empty pleasures and the company of women.

Orhan Kemal explicitly described in his nonfiction writings and interviews what he saw as the author's role in sharing the reality of the oppressed. He wrote mainly in a social realist style, and tried to explain class relationships in Turkish society to metropolitan audiences. He was explicit about the political purpose of his writing, saying that the goal of his art was "to develop the human race's happiness and independence in accordance with the positive directions of the sciences"⁹. Kemal portrayed large cross-sections of society, from day-laborers in the rural areas around Adana to the urban poor which had migrated to large cities in Western Turkey and taken up residence in their *gecekondu*s. He told stories through the eyes of his characters who, rather than serving as the mouthpiece for the socialist artist, provided a first-person vision of reality by allowing entry into their life experience, as they verbalized it. According to Taylan Altuğ, Kemal's work is distin-

⁹"Sanatımın amacı... Şöyle özetlemekte bir sakınca var mı acaba? Halkımızın, genel olarak da insan soyunun müspet bilimler doğrultusundaki en bağımsız koşullar içinde, en mutlu olmasını isteme çabası." (Bezirci, 1984:46). Translation is my own.

guished by a sociological social realism, wherein the author reduces the influence of his own thoughts and feelings for the sake of a direct, practical reflection of social realities¹⁰. Orhan Kemal agreed with the aims of socialist realism in requiring the author to take a revolutionary stance against the hegemonic classes¹¹, but at the same time differed by not using “ideal types who show the way, who show people how they can be saved from a broken system through their actions and words”¹².

1.3 Can the Anatolian Subaltern Speak?

But to what extent is any author truly able to step out of the way of his or her own characters? In any literary work in which the intellectual turns an individual into an object-of-knowledge, readers should heed Gayatri Spivak’s warning of the ideological distortions of representation. In her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?”¹³, Spivak doubts whether any subaltern subject can be heard when it has been written over by the dominant intellectual discourse. She suggests that elite portrayals of the subaltern work based on the imagining of a stable subject who can be named, whether it be “the villager”, “the worker” or that most reifying of all titles: “the people”. These names work as an essen-

¹⁰ Altuğ, Taylan. *Türkiye Defteri Dergisi*, Ağustos 1974. Orhan Kemal Hayatı – Sanat Anlayışı – Hikâyeleri – Romanları – Oyunları – Anıları. By Asım Bezirci. İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1984. 122-23. Print.

¹¹ Uğurlu, Nurer. *Orhan Kemal'in İktbal Kahvesi*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1970. Print. 373.

¹² Narlı, Mehmet. *Orhan Kemal'in Romanları üzerine Bir İnceleme*. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002. Print. 27.

¹³ Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: U of Illinois, 1988. N. pag. Print.

tialization, imprinting these subjects with the author's expectations and assumptions as to how they act, what they can say, and most importantly, what they *should* want. The preferred subject for these narratives is one whose collective interests and desires could coincide under ideal political circumstances. The work of committed literature, and socialist realism in particular, is meant to portray the movement towards the realization of this "true" political consciousness. Even if writing fiction is a way to advocate on behalf of the subaltern, representations reduce and erase the heterogeneity and contested nature of their identity, forcing them into the mold of a pre-fabricated political or narrative purpose. Spivak points to the confusion between two different concepts often run together by the single term *representation* as a way to explain how intellectuals talk over the voice of the subaltern. What is conflated by the term are the two separate acts of representing, that of painting a portrait or staging a scene (*Darstellung*) and of representation as a proxy or a standing in (*Vertretung*) for another person on his/her behalf, especially in the political or legal sense. Turkish village novels function according to this latter form of representation when fictional characters stand in for the subaltern rather than portray them in an unmediated way.

Stated ambitions aside, given the history of the village novel as a genre borne out of an explicitly ideological social policy, and admitting the tendency of intellectuals to commit epistemic violence by assuming a tangible subaltern subject, should we even remark on Kemal's credentials as a life-long day-laborer, migrant, and political prisoner

himself¹⁴? Can a literary project ever claim to speak for the subaltern — in our case, the rural Anatolian — or does the writer, in the very act of assuming the authority of author, take off his subaltern hat in exchange for that of *Vertretungen*?¹⁵

I would like to propose that in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* the subaltern can speak, and does so quite literally. Kemal's use of speech, especially in the form of dialogue between characters, offers a representation of the subaltern without acting as a reference to an ideal type. Recent work in pragmatics and sociolinguistics offers new insights into how social meaning is created in language¹⁶ and the ways in which interdiscursivity builds forms of knowledge¹⁷. Through a reading of the speech in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* using the work of Silverstein on indexical order, and Kärkkäinen on stancetaking, I will show that Orhan Kemal's unique focus on speech does in fact point to a subaltern consciousness without overwriting it¹⁸.

¹⁴ See Bezirci, Asım. *Orhan Kemal*. İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1984. N. Print. for biography and interviews with the author

¹⁵ Indeed, the Turkish village novel characters either conform to the expected stereotypes of ignorance, sexism, and backwardness, or they have something revelatory to tell the reader about the essential decency of the village worldview. In both cases, the villager is the bearer of this cluster of expectations.

¹⁶ Silverstein, Michael. "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life." *Language & Communication* 23.3-4 (2003): 193-229. Web.

¹⁷ Kärkkäinen, Elise. "Stancetaking in Conversation: From Subjectivity to Intersubjectivity." *Text & Talk: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse & Communication Studies* 26.6 (2006): 699-731. Web.

¹⁸ Spivak, 82.

Representing the Subaltern in the Turkish Village Novel

2.1 The Indexical Orders of Dialogic Speech

After the first publication of *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*, reviewers in the Turkish press made direct references to Kemal's use of vernacular language. Few of them were unreservedly positive. Many critics expressed ambiguous feelings about the use of dialect. Seyfettin Başçılar in *Demokrat Kilis* wrote, for instance, about his confusion over Kemal's use of dialect in what he described as a series of "incongruous stretched-out conversations"¹⁹. He admitted, however, that Orhan Kemal must have known that creating peasants who spoke in official Turkish would have been like having them wear a fedora while dressed in Shalwar pants²⁰. Other critics were less forgiving. For example, Yıldırım Keskin wrote:

However from the very first lines of *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* you will see that it is written in a very bad language. Orhan Kemal is not an author to use language so poorly. But it is clear, he never went back to read what he had written. Even when giving the book to be published he didn't give it the proper attention.²¹

But, rather than having committed an oversight, Orhan Kemal, who was keenly aware of the relationship between vernacular language and the content of social realism, intended

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Başçılar, Seyfettin. "Demokrat Kilis 19 October 1955- Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde." *Bereketli Topraklar üzerinde*. By Mazlum Vesek. 1st ed. İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2014. 382. Print.

²¹ "Oysaki daha ilk satırlarda Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde çok kötü bir dille yazılmış olduğunu görüyorsunuz. Orhan Kemal, Türkçeyi bu kadar kötü kullanacak bir yazar değildir. Ama belli, bir defa yazdıktan sonra okumamış. Hatta eseri kitap halinde yayımlamak üzere verirken bile gereken dikkati göstermemiş" Keskin, Yıldırım. "Yenilik November 1954 - Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde." *Bereketli Topraklar üzerinde*. By Mazlum Vesek. 1st ed. İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2014. 380. Print. Translation is my own.

for complex conversation written in accurate dialect to serve as the foundation of his fictional representation of social groups. Language, in his eyes, was a reflection of concrete individuals inasmuch as it is always culturally and historically determined.

In every age people speak in a way which shows the imprint of the time they live in and its conditions. I do not claim that people will one day shed all of the differences of dialect and all speak an ideal Turkish.²²

Kemal understood how conversation conveys the complexities of social interactions by using the term “the dialectic of conversation”. In several interviews he addressed his preference for using colloquial speech in his writing thusly:

In my stories and in my novels I am trying to work with a type of technique you could call reportage...For this I am relying on the dialectic of conversation... and for this reason I must keep the differences of dialect.²³

In writing the speech of peasants and workers in novels such as *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*, Orhan Kemal was informed by a lifetime of living amongst working people. Having grown up in and around Adana, Kemal could recreate a variety of vernaculars and repertoires to match the linguistic diversity of his native region²⁴. He was vocal in interviews about the link between the unique experiences of peasants in their struggles to survive, and the language in which this could be depicted and expressed. “The spirit of

²²Bezirci, 59.

²³ “ Hikâye ve romanlarımda bir çeşit röportaj demek olan teknikle çalışıyorum... Bunun için de konuşmanın diyalektiğine baş vuruyorum.. Ve şive ayrılıklarını korumak zorunda kalıyorum.” Uğurlu, Nurer. *Orhan Kemal'in İkbâl Kahvesi*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1970. Print. 66 Translation is my own.

²⁴ This is especially true of his middle period of novel writing, which depicts the struggles of rural workers in the Chukurova region of south central Turkey.

those people living a wretched and disjointed life will not be explained in a clean-cut (düzgün) spoken language”²⁵.

This iconizing depiction of language as straight and clean-cut, or as poor and dirty — the association between linguistic features and social groups, whereby mismatched language is described as a fedora on top of a person wearing shalwar pants— shows up repeatedly as a theme in the writings of both Orhan Kemal and his critics. Far beyond the realm of official state policy, language ideology plays out in the literary realm as well when one claims that the structure or content of a language somehow mirrors a “social group's inherent nature or essence”²⁶. It is true that peasants from different areas of Anatolia have typical ways of speaking which index them. Using various rural dialects would allow Kemal to identify his rural characters and make them seem more realistic for his urban audience— that is better conforming to urban stereotypes about the ways in which people in the country speak.²⁷. This would be an example of Kemal using pre-existing ideologies of language known as *enregisterment*: the processes through which a linguistic

²⁵ “perişan ve dağınık bir hayat süren insanların meramlarını düzgün bir konuşma dili içinde anlatmayacakları” quoted in Aytekin, Halil. “Yücel August 1956- Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde.” *Bereketli Topraklar üzerinde*. By Mazlum Vesek. 1st ed. İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2014. 383-386. Print. He is referring to İstanbul Turkish in particular.

²⁶ Irvine, Judith T. and Susan Gal “Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation.” *Regimes of Language*. Oxford 2000. pg. 37.

²⁷ Posthumous reviews of his work have since come to largely praise his ability to capture the feel of vernacular language: “O, alt sınıfın, sokağın dilini, sesini, duygusunu şiirli bir söylem ve kısa, vurucu yeni bir biçimle edebiyatımıza taşımış, halkın sesini yansıtmıştır.” Özerinç, Emine. *Orhan Kemal'in Fabrika Ve Toprak İşçilerini Konu Alan Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde, Vukuat Var Ve Hanımın Çiftliği Romanlarında Yapı, Tema Ve Anlatım*. Diss. Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, 2010. Gazimağusa, Kuzey Kıbrıs: n.p., 2010. Print.pg. 12.

repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms²⁸. Plenty of novels are full of lively, colloquial speech only to be openly condescending of its speakers. And even if an author's intentions are more altruistic, merely hoping to give voice to the peasantry, it is still fair to ask whether a narrative constructed from voices marked by local speech is merely benefiting from "an aura of narrative specificity"²⁹: having authentic sounding characters faithfully act out the political fantasies of intellectuals.

As exotic as Kemal's characters language may be for an urban reader, I would like to argue in this section that the use of dialogue does far more than act as a linguistic costume for stereotypical rural characters, seeking to transform a speech which is meant to be a collectively intended social act into a 'text for knowledge' meant for only one receiver: most likely the educated reader in Istanbul or Ankara³⁰. Kemal constructs his representation of the subaltern in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* mainly through the raw material of dialogic speech, and this is the crucial difference between *Darstellung* and *Vertretung*. Dialogical speech is unique among linguistic forms of expression in its ability to represent at once a whole field of socio-cultural identities which are fluid and intersectional. Dialogue is a site for much more than the conflict between the city and the coun-

²⁸ see Agha 2003 These forms can then be used iconically to make claims about a social group i.e. poor people speak sloppy Turkish, or recursively i.e. a pattern at one level is projected on other levels homologically.

²⁹ Spivak, 67.

³⁰ Spivak, 82.

try; it can also capture/reflect inequalities between worker and boss, misunderstandings between Turks and other ethnic groups, and the tug-of-war between genders negotiating sexual and monetary arrangements. Sometimes in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* several of these contexts are being indexed at once. For example, in the scene where the three friends have begun working at a cotton factory, a clerk stops to question Hasan why he is shivering. The following conversation ensues.

<p>— Ne o? dedi. Ne oluyorsunuz? Kaım kemikli, iriyarı ama kupkuru biri: — Donuyok, diye tekrarladı. Kâtibin yüzü bok koklamışçasma buruştu: — Donuyoruz desene lan, hırt! işçinin çeneleri vuruyordu: — Donuyok, diye tekrarladı. — Donuyoruz de be! — Donuyok! — Mahsus mu yapıyorsun? Do—nu—yo—ruz! — Do—nu—yok. — Ayı efendim ayı. Donuyoruz! — Diyemem kâtip evendi, dilim alışmış bir sefer, dönmüyor..</p>	<p>—What’s that? he said. What’s going on? He was strong boned, portly, but totally dry: —We’re froze, he repeated. — The clerk’s face scrunched up like he had just smelled shit: —Say we’re freezing buddy, you moron! he shot at him : —we’re froze, he repeated. — Say we’re freezing! — we’re froze! —Are you doing that on purpose We—’re—free—zing! —We’—re—fro—ze. — You ape!. We’re freezing! —I can’t say it Mr. Clerk sir. My tongue is used to saying it that way; it won’t change..</p>
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31

In correcting the way that Hasan, the villager, says “we’re freezing,” the clerk is making linguistic-ideological judgments about which grammatical forms are acceptable, and by extension deriding Hasan’s class background. The inability to utter “we’re freezing” is at once a sign of Hasan’s lack of formal education, his upbringing in an Anatolian village, and his lack of acclimation to urban culture. All of these facts apparently offend the clerk, who is eager to exploit all that Hasan’s “we’re froze” reveals in order to reinforce

³¹ Kemal, 29.

the cultural inequalities of a relationship that is already economically asymmetrical. In response, Hasan politely replies that that's just the way his tongue is used to saying it, thereby acceding to and internalizing these linguistic ideological assumptions as natural and fixed. At once we have multiple contested identities providing a macro-context for a single interpersonal interaction.

In another scene a subcontractor of the Laz ethnicity comes to the stable where the three men have been lodging to offer them work in his quarry. The subcontractor's dialogue is written in such a way to show a clearly discernible accent.

<p>— Yaklaşın pakayum, dedi. Yaklaştılar. Çekmiyorlardı. Başındaki beyaz mantar şapkaya göre adam memur filân olmalıydı ama, ne? Sordu: — Nerelisinuz? Yusuf: — Biz mi? dedi. Taşeron kızdıysa da üstelemedi. Yusuf ardını getirdi: — Ç. den oluruz.. — Evli misiniz, bekâr mı? — Ben evliyim. Bu, Ali... ergen daha. Ergen dedimse, hani sözlü. Anası bu yıl everecek... — Var inşaatımız, büyük. Verecegum üçer buçuk, sağlam. Çalışır misunuz? Yazayum mi? Fabrikada kazandıklarından fazla para geçecekti ellerine. Yusuf: «— Ne dersin?» demek isteyerek baktı Aliye. Ali'nin pek bir fikri yoktu. Omuz silkti. Taşeron sabırsızlıkla, tekrarladı: — Yazayum mi?</p>	<p>—Come closer. Let's see, he said. They came closer. They didn't pull away. The man with the mushroom shaped hat on his head must have been some kind of official but, what kind? He asked: —Where are you from? Yusuf: —You mean us? he said. If the subcontractor was angry he didn't dwell on it. Yusuf went on: —We're from Ch... —Are you married or single? —I am married. This here, Ali...he's still young. If I say young, well, he's promised to someone. Her mother gonna let her get married this year... —We have a construction project, a big one. I will give three and a half, guaranteed. Will you work? Shall I write your names down? They'd make more money than they were making in the factory. Yusuf looked at Ali as if to say, "what do you say?". Ali didn't have much of an idea. He shrugged. The subcontractor repeated his question impatiently: — Shall I write your names down?</p>
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32

³² Kemal, 41.

In this scene, just as the shape of the subcontractor's hat prompts the three men to guess that he is some sort of official, his specific style of speech prompts the reader to draw a variety of other conclusions about his background. Marked by his distinctive speaking style, with 'b's becoming 'p's and his vowels not conforming to the rules of Turkish vowel harmony, a reader familiar with different ethnicities in Turkey immediately recognize him as a speaker from the Black Sea region and be reminded of their own stereotypes about the region's Laz people. Yusuf's tangent about Ali being single, but in reality having promised himself to a girl back in their village, reveals that his thought (and speech) is still influenced by the circuitous, slow pace of village conversations. As we can see, Orhan Kemal uses a whole host of different registers and dialects in the novel. Many characters using more than one register within the novel—a few even switch between Turkish and Kurdish—as the author seemingly understands that “every speaker has a repertoire of registers that, when used, become second-order indexes of class and related social positioning in modern social formations of inequality.³³”

These preliminary examples attempt to show that by unpacking the different indexical orders which constitute the pragmatic conditions of speech in the novel, even the most innocuous conversation can be shown to be the site where relationships from the immediately interpersonal to the abstractly political are actively negotiated. As Michael Silverstein charts in his work on the indexical order, speech is never rendered meaningful

³³ Silverstein, 121-2.

by and for only one context³⁴. Speech cannot merely instantiate an ideological representation of the peasant sought for by the socialist author, or expected by the intellectual reader. The meaning of Yusuf's speech in the novel is determined by a complex dialectic of micro and macro-sociological contexts — almost all employed unconsciously — which are not under the control of the author, regardless of whatever awareness he claims to have of them. The determination of what speech represents in terms of how its meaning is pragmatically activated, is outside of the ability of a committed intellectual to determine or even fully decipher³⁵. What does actually determine indexical meaning is the interplay between the immediate interpersonal context within which indexical signs are being used - that is to say their “effectiveness-in” - and the autonomous meta-pragmatics which set the parameters for usage in the exchange -in other words, their “appropriateness-to”.

To give an example of this from early in the novel, Yusuf is attempting to demonstrate his knowledge of the urban world to his friends, having previously travelled to the town of Sivas for work³⁶.

³⁴ Silverstein.

³⁵ The source of social “meaning” can never be reduced to an empirical investigation “any actual verbally-centered interaction is layered with so many dialectical partials..., that it is impossible to reduce “felicity’s condition” (Goffman, 1983) to science (much less linguistics) in either of these vulgar senses of billiard-ball sociology or introspective intuitionism.” Silverstein, 197.

³⁶ This epistemic stance-taking will be examined in detail below in section 7.

<p>— Ne diyon Köse ne diyon? Gece olmaz mı, sokaklarda tekmi elektrikler yanar, gündüz gibi, ipil ipil. O tomafiller, o avratlar, o ne bileyim canım, dille tarifi mümkünsüz. Siftah gidince adamı bir çarpar ki eh. kendi kendini yitirirsin, ne yana bakacağını şaşırırsın. Lâkin kardaşlar, biz biz olalım, şehirlinin dolabına düşmiyelim. Anam avradım olsun, bizi yek ekmeğe muhtaç ederler!</p>	<p>—Whatcho say Beardless, watcho say? As soon as it's night they light all de' electric lamps in the streets like daytime. Those cars, those chicks, what do I know man, I can't depict it with words. The first time you go it hits a guy, you know... you lose you'self, don't know which way to look. But brothers, let's be us, we ain't fallin' into the city's trap. I swear by my mother and my wife, they'll only make us need bread!</p>
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37

His choice of language is determined both by the conventions of his village dialect, a macro-contextual framework which he shares with his two friends — which may just so happen to index an ideological image of rural speech for an urban audience — and by Yusuf's micro-contextual efforts to impress his friends with his past experience by a performance of strange terminology from the city. He rattles off some of the wonders to be seen: the women, the cars, and the enigmatic force called electricity (written as “alek-tirikler” in the original version, and the more standard Turkish “elektrikler” used in the revision). Even Yusuf's choice of this single word is indexical to more than just one indexical order. It is not merely a yokel mispronouncing the word for electricity, creating a crude reenactment of rural ignorance. It is a linguistic performance in a register perceived as natural to its audience. Silverstein claims that in individual conversations people relate to one another based on the immediate goals of the interaction, whether it is asking when

³⁷ Kemal, 22. This text is given as an example by Mazlum Vesek of the many changes made in Kemal's second edition in 1964 in order to strengthen the message of the novel and its strength as fiction. This example in particular, however, shows how Kemal took to heart criticisms of the indecipherability of some of his dialogue and how he rewrote it to dilute some of the idiosyncracies of speech. Vesek, 8. Text presented above is from the later version.

the train will be arriving, or when they will be getting their factory wage. But at the same time these interactions entail conventional or institutionalized frameworks of social differentiation — partitions and gradations of social space — at the lexical and syntactical level³⁸.

Asymmetries are acted out in every verbal exchange between workers and bosses. At one point in the novel Yusuf and Ali approach the management of the cotton factory to ask about wages which have been taken out from their pay, and they are rebuffed harshly. In this exchange, the asymmetries of their relationship, determined by larger economic and political conditions, are reflected linguistically when the laborers use reverential language and when the shift manager, in turn, tells them to fuck off.

<p>Irgatbaşı: — Ulan ibneler, dedi. Ne için ettiniz beni şikâyet? Yusuf da Ali de sarsıldılar. Irgatbaşı'nin elleri arkasındaydı, sokuldu. Hiç beklediği anda Yusuf'a bir tokat. Yusuf'un kasketi uçtu, sendeledi. Kollarıyla yüzünü kapamıştı. — Hep senin başının altından çıkar bunlar değil mi? Acıdık, aldık işe, ettin beni şikâyet... Defolun, iş miş yok size, yallah!</p>	<p>The foreman: —Hey faggots, he said. Why did you rat on me? Yusuf and Ali were both taken aback. The foreman's hands were behind his back. He sidled up to them. Without warning he smacked Yusuf. Yusuf's hardhat flew off, he stumbled. He covered his face with his arms. — You're the one behind all of this, aren't you? We pitied you, gave you work, and now you're complaining...Get the fuck out of here. There ain't no more work for you here. Move it!</p>
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This is class struggle in the guise of profanity and physical violence, but a reflection of it nonetheless. *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* is full of these types of interactions where bosses use verbal intimidation and violence, and then counter it with flattery and bribery,

³⁸ Silverstein, 202.

³⁹ Kemal, 44.

to keep their workers in line. The word “faggot” (ibne) in particular shows up as the bosses’ insult of choice, as they try to cow workers by insulting their weakness and ef-feminacy if they complain about their work conditions. Later in the novel, when Ali has moved on to work in the fields harvesting wheat, the overseer begins his string of insults with “faggot” when Ali complains about his back hurting. Ali, flustered and confused, continues to use honorary titles with his boss.

<p>— Ne yapıyorsun burda lan? — Sırtım gidişti de çavuş ağa... — Vaziyet al karşımda, ibne! Ali çevresine bakındı: Bu da ne demekti? Vaziyet nasıl alınır? — Vaziyet alsana lan! — Ne vaziyeti çavuşum? Omuzuna bir sopa, bir sopa daha: — Kerhaneci. Vaziyet almayı bilmiyor daha!</p>	<p>—What are you doing here dude? —My back has had it, overseer lord... — Take your position when you’re talking to me, faggot! Ali looked around: What did this mean? How could he get his position? —Take your position man! —What position, overseer? Another baton on his shoulders, another baton: —Brothel addict. He still doesn’t know how to take his position!</p>
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40

The repeated use of the word “faggot” in work confrontations helps to underscore what Silverstein describes as the dialectic nature of the indexical order. At the same time that the pragmatics of individual interactions are determined by ideological conceptions of how social space is naturally ordered, these conceptions are, in turn, strengthened and renewed by their presence in micro-contexts. What makes them seem so common-sense is how often they are invoked in conversation. The macro-sociological is actually projected from within all of these interdiscursivities taking place in micro-contextual spaces and

⁴⁰ Kemal, 246-7.

in turn asymmetrically determining others.⁴¹ The patriarchal use of the word “faggot”, used forcefully between male workers within a micro-contextual interaction, becomes an indexical sign for the weak laborers, a value-conferring essence which achieves self-grounding in its ritual repetition⁴². With each new abusive interaction, Ali has yet more proof that this ideologically presented rationalization for abuse— that bosses call workers faggots because workers complain and are weak — is normal and true. Rather than workers seeing their conditions as inhumane, they would blame themselves for not being up to the demands of the job.

2.2 Challenging Ideologies Through Language

Ideology in the novel, then, is not a conceptualization of social reality projected by the dominant class and enforced through a coercive politics. The hegemonic conception of the social order is constructed from the material of interactional discourse in which even its losers participate actively. That is not to say that this account will forevermore reproduce inequalities. The dialectical construction of ideology through linguistic exchange ensures its constant developments towards new conceptions of social space, offering speakers the chance to challenge it with each new micro-contextual interaction. An example of this is the fight over work breaks at several points in the middle section of the novel. The managers and workers constantly struggle over the pace of

⁴¹ Silverstein, 202.

⁴² Silverstein, 203.

work, the time given for breaks, the discrepancies in accommodations between the laborers and management; and each of these struggles is acted out principally through dialogue.

<p>Düdüğünü çıkarıp hırsla öttürdü. Düdük sesi de harman makinesinin yuttuğu öteki gürültüler gibi günün aşırı sıcağıyla birlikte makinenin şakırtısı arasında eridi. — Hele bir az daha işlesin dümbükler! dedi ustaya bakarak. Usta kızmıştı bu insafsızlığa: — Allah size kel versin de tırnak vermesin! dedi. Elinize fırsat geçti mi Firaun'dan farksızsınız!</p>	<p>He took his whistle out and blew it forcefully. The sound of the whistle, like all the other sounds, got swallowed by the rattling of the threshing machines and melted in the extreme heat of the midday sun. —Let's make those idiots work a little harder! he said, looking at the master. The master was angered by this cruelty: —May God make you go bald and not give you fingernails! he said. When you get the opportunity, you're no different than a Pharaoh!</p>
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43

In the first instance of this fight, the foreman argues with the head of the haymaker crew (referred to as Usta (expert)) about the length of the break to be given.

As opposed to Ali, who continues to speak reverently towards his boss, even when being kicked and insulted, the Usta immediately returns the insults.

<p>Irgatbaşı gene sinirli sinirli güldü, sonra: — Peki öyleyse, dedi. Hatırım için paydos edek! — Benim hatırım için ne kıymeti var? — Ne olacak ya? — Heriflerin hakları olduğu için vereceksin paydosu. Ağır işçi bunlar. Insafsızca, çok çalıştırmakla daha fazla mı randıman alacağını sanıyorsun? Kara cahil irgatbaşının anltyacağı sözler değildi. — Ne bileyim ben? — Bilmediğin işin başına ne geçiyorsun?</p>	<p>The foreman smiled petulantly, then: —Well then okay, he said. We'll take a break for your sake. —What's it worth if it's for my sake? —What's wrong with that huh? —You'll give a break because these guys have a right to it. Their work is tough... If you work them hard, mercilessly, do you think you'll be able to get more of a yield out of them? These weren't words the stubbornly ignorant foreman would understand. —What do I know? —Why are you doing work you don't understand?</p>
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⁴³ Kemal, 221-2.

The Usta turns both the foreman's own words and their underlying ideological message around on him by repurposing the phrase "for the sake of" (*hatırı için*). By challenging this common-sense notion that breaks are for the sake of work, and re-centering the discourse in terms of worker's rights, the Usta immediately forces the foreman to relent for the time being; and the workers get to stay on break for the fully allotted time. What's more, the workers enjoy a micro-contextual instance whereby breaks are understood as a right, not a privilege. The struggle over the length of the working day continues⁴⁵. Watching from the driver's seat of the haymaker during this first exchange is Zeynel, the strong-willed day laborer who will continue to stand up to the foreman. Shortly after the first interaction, Zeynel finds himself yet again advocating for his fellow workers when the work whistle is blown.

⁴⁴ Kemal, 221-222.

⁴⁵ There are in fact many wonderful examples in the novel of Orhan Kemal illustrating some of the basic lessons of Marx's *Capital* through these verbal interactions such as: the reserve army of labor, the increasing pace of work, and the struggle between worker and machine, worthy of its own treatment. However, rather than meant to personalize general processes for the sake of a heroic teleology, Kemal seems firmly grounded in the drudgery and injustice of the present. So much so that in his comments on the novel, Nazim Hikmet called *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* overly pessimistic to be socialist realism. see Özçelebi.

<p>Her günden daha kısa süren paydos, yorgun ır-gatları sınırlendirmişti. Homurtular oldu: — Ne o be? Ne oluyor be? — Vay kerhaneci vay... Ulan zaten doğru dürüst bir soluk aldırılmaz... — Firaun deyyus Firaun! Sırtüstü uzandığı yerden doğrulup, düdük sesinin geldiği yana bakan Veysel: — İş başı mı ne? dedi. — İş başı ya, dedi biri. — Ne çabuk yahu?</p> <p>— Bunun yaptığı çok oluyor arkadaş... Düdük daha kuvvetle yeniden öttü. İrgatlar Zeynel'in çevresini almışlardı: — Şuna bir meram anlat Zeynel ağa, dedi iç-lerinden biri. Zeynel kesti attı: — Meramı müramı yok. Çalsın çalabildiği kadar, boş verin!</p>	<p>The work break, which was shorter than the one given every day, made the tired workers irritated. There was grumbling: —What's this man. What's going on man? —Ugh this brothel addict ugh...The jerk doesn't give a damn if we can't get one good breath... —Pharoah, cuckold pharoah! Veysel sat up from the place where he'd been stretched out and looked in the direction from which the sound of the whistle had come: — Is it time to work? He said. — Work time, yeah, said someone. —Why so fast man? —He does this a lot, brother...the whistle blew again with more force. The laborers surrounded Zeynel: —Tell this guy something, Master Zeynel, said one of them. Zeynel cut them off: —There's nothing to tell. Let him blow as hard as he can, who cares!</p>
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46

This time we see the workers themselves adopting the Usta's earlier insults, calling the foreman a pharaoh, and using a few colorful expressions of their own. The foreman blows his whistle several more times, but the linguistic spell has been broken, even for Ali. A boss is not a master (ağa) or a sergeant (çavuş) but now a brothel addict (kerhaneci) and a cuckold (deyyus). Interesting to note here is how often these derogatory terms of address are iconized to forms of unacceptable sexual behavior, further strengthening the ideological link between language and morality.

Zeynel continues to insist on workers' rights and insight his fellow workers to stand up for themselves. But rather than leading to a climax in which injustices are confronted, Zeynel will be labeled a "troublemaker" and eventually fired from working on

⁴⁶ Kemal, 227.

the haymaker crew. Once he is gone, the foreman's verbal violence and abuse of power begins again, leaving the unexperienced and tractable Ali as the main victim. In the climactic scene in which the pace of work on the haymaker proves to be fatal for Ali, the verbal prodding of the foreman leads to the breakneck pace of work.

<p>Koca koca demetler daha büyük bir hızla patoza koşturulmağa başladı. Öyle hızlı, öylesine müthiş bir çalışma başını almış gidiyordu ki, Küçük ağa bile bu hıza kendini kaptırmıştı. Patoza az daha sokuldu. Ne saman tozu, ne sıcak...</p> <p>— Ha babam kardaşlarım ha, ha babayiğitler ha, ha aslanlar ha!!! Bu işi bu hafta bitirin, ben de insansam kalmam altında!</p> <p>Irgatbaşı da çalışmanın hızına kendini kaptırmıştı. Tempoyu daha da hızlandırmak, ağanın gözüne büsbütün girmek için:</p> <p>— Devir, devir, devir!!! diye bağırdı. Ha babam kardaşlarım ha, ha babayiğitler ha, ha aslanlar ha!!!</p> <p>— Devir ha, devir ha, devir!</p> <p>— Ha, ha, ha, ha!!!</p> <p>İş hızlandıkça hızlandı, baş döndürücü bir hal aldı.</p> <p>— Devirin ha, devirin ha, devirin!!</p> <p>— Hahahahahahaaaa!</p> <p>Beden kalınlığında demetler, patozun doymak bilmi— yen ağzından içeri devriliyordu. Irgatlar öfkeyle, kinle, hınçla çalışıyorlardı.</p>	<p>The huge bundles began to be run to the haymaker with more speed. Such speed, such a great amount of work was being undertaken that the sub-leader was become entranced by it. He came up closer to the haymaker. So much hay dust, such heat...</p> <p>—Hey pops brothers hey, hey big guys hey, hey lions hey!!! Finish the work this week, if I'm a man, I won't be stuck under all this work!</p> <p>The foreman was also trying to increase the speed of the work</p> <p>In order to quicken the tempo even more, to endeavor himself even more to the landlord.</p> <p>—Toss 'em up yeah, Toss 'em up yeah, Toss 'em up!</p> <p>—ha, ha, ha, ha!!!</p> <p>The work kept getting faster, it was enough to make your head spin.</p> <p>—Toss 'em up yeah, Toss 'em up yeah, Toss 'em up!</p> <p>— Hahahahahahaaaa!</p> <p>The bundles as thick as a body were spinning around in the insatiable mouth of the haymaker. The laborers worked angrily, begrudgingly, with a vengeance.</p>
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It is literally words which kill Ali, as he is unable to respond to the driving force of the foreman's demands. If any political allegory can be drawn from the novel's climax, it would be this: Ali's ultimate inability to challenge the hegemonic demands of the foreman, despite all the former attempts by workers to resist it, results in the order asserting

⁴⁷ Kemal, 348.

itself with a vengeance. Speech does not merely reflect social inequalities, but it is the very realm in which these inequalities are reproduced and contested. Spoken conflicts in the novel show the complex power dynamics between characters, without reducing either one side to the typified role of victim or oppressor. And lastly, dialogic speech offers us an effective strategy of representation as it shows us how ideology and political struggle are experienced by individuals: as the continuous interpersonal interactions which make up a person's social world.

2.3 Gender Relations Through Verbal Negotiations

Beyond the focus on labor exploitation, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* shows how workers are equally capable of turning around and exploiting others: namely women. Women work alongside men in the field, fraternizing with them and often entering into sexual relationships. There is also a detailed scene where a group of workers, including Ali, visit a brothel with their monthly wages⁴⁸. However, it is not fair to say that women are not always depicted as passive victims to sexual exploitation and violence⁴⁹. They often resist these attempts by men through dialogue. In fact, they are often able to benefit financially from selling their bodies when and to whom they want. The novel's main fe-

⁴⁸ In his review of the novel, Berna Moran claims that Orhan Kemal aimed to show his characters, both men and women, in pursuit of only two things: money and sexual pleasure. What makes the book shocking, in his opinion, is its depiction of humans willing to degrade themselves both mentally and physically, stooping to the level of sleeping in a barn and selling out their friends like animals, driven by their base desires to fill their stomachs and get off. Moran, Berna. "Soylu Vahşi Olarak Kuyucaklı Yusuf." *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış II*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990. N. pag. Print. Pg. 40-41.

⁴⁹ In the brothel scene, it is Ali who comes off as nervous and subservient as the prostitute orders him to undress.

male character Fatma is an example of this of this position. After having previously been in a relationship with Ali, she begins to respond to the advances of the farm servant Bilal who hopes to have sexual relations with her. Her seduction takes place over a long series of conversations. In each of them, Bilal prods and pleads to take her into the barn, and the whole while she resists and negotiated.

<p>— O Aptal kızı esas kerhaneden çıkmaymış... Doğru mu? Bilâl sokuldu, elini tuttu: — Doğru ya, boşver aptal kızına. Bugün tamam mıyız? Fatma elini çekti: — Ne tamam mı? — Şu ahıra giriverelim! Fatma ahırdan yana baktı, omuz silkti. Bilâl elini gene tuttu: — Seni çiftlikte korum. Bedavadan yer içersin, haftalığın da gene haftalık! Fatma elini çekti. Bilâl kolunu tuttu bu sefer. Fatma huylandı: — Bırak! Bilâl bırakmadı. — Bırak be! — Bırak kolumu... — Niye? — Bir gören oluverir... — Kim görecek? Güneşin altında herkesin Allahı şaşıyor...</p>	<p>—That derv girl came from the brothel...is that true? Bilal sidled up to her, took her by the hand: —It's true, but don't worry about the derv girl. Are we good for today? Fatma took her hand back: —What do you mean are we good? —Let's go into that barn! Fatma looked over at the barn, she shrugged her shoulders. Bilal took her hand again: —I'll set you up on the farm. You'll eat and drink for free, and you'll still get your weekly pay! —Fatma took her hand away. This time Bilal took her by the arm. Fatma scowled. —Let go! Bilal didn't let her go. —Let me go dude! —..... —Let my arm go... —Why? —Someone might see... —Who will see? Everyone forgets about God under the midday sun.</p>
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Fatma is distressed about her former lover Ali having taken up with the derv girl. Bilal tells her to forget about it as he begins his advance. He alludes to his desire to have sex in the barn by asking: “Are we good for today?” When Fatma feigns ignorance, Bilal speaks

⁵⁰ Kemal, 192.

more explicitly about their financial arrangement. When that doesn't work, he tries physical coercion, and lastly a plea to disregard religious mores. For her part, we see how exactly Fatma is caught between different male relationships, and how her control over the linguistic exchange steadily diminishes. However, Fatma and Bilal's privacy is suddenly interrupted when a female cook shows up, and Fatma is able to keep Bilal waiting. After a few more exchanges, it is Fatma has begun to chip away at Bilal's patience, and when they finally do retreat into the barn to have sex, it is on Fatma's terms.

<p>Bilâl kadına sarılmak istedi. Kadın elleriyle göğüsledi adamı: — Dur! — Niye? — Bir lâf ver bana... — Ne lâfi? — Beni temelli çiftlikte koyacaksın değil mi? Heyecandan Bilâl'in sesi titriyordu: — Koyacam, dedi. — Söz mü? — Söz!</p>	<p>— Bilal wanted to embrace the woman. The woman pushed the man back with her hands: — Stop! — But why? — Tell me something... — What? — You'll really get me work on the farm, right? Bilal's voice was shaking from excitement — I'll get you work, he said. — Do I have your word? — You have my word!</p>
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51

It is now Bilal who seems weak, his voice trembling as he is overcome by sexual desire. Fatma is in control in the situation and is able to have Bilal promise her directly that he will get her work on the farm, a precise compensation for engaging in sexual relations. That this relationship is negotiated through conversational speech — the verbal contract is literally called “a word” in Turkish— shows how female characters like Fatma may

⁵¹ Kemal, 211.

feel ambiguous towards these kinds of transactions. As in all other interactions in the novel, it is dialogue which allows for the nature of these relationships — simultaneously symbiotic and predatory, doting and degrading — to be represented in all their ambiguity.

It is fair to say that restricting portrayals of women to sexual transactions is not an exemplary use of representing subjects who are supposed to exist doubly in epistemic shadow⁵². But even despite the underdeveloped staging of these exchanges, one does not have to go so far as to resort to “measuring silences” in order to reach towards an unmediated female subjectivity in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*. Spivak underestimates the dynamic ability of speech itself to present multiple indexical orders at once, as she assumes that the epistemic violence of the intellectual forecloses the possibility of alternative conceptualizations of female subjectivity to emerge from speech. She claims this to be true even “if the absurdity of the non-representing intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved.”⁵³ I claim that to the contrary, when this space is achieved for individuals to converse, what will be absurd is to fear that the intellectual will alone be sovereign in dictating the indexical context upon which their speech will make sense. Fatma cannot be reduced to a mere victim, nor sublimated as sexually liberated and empowered. Try as one might to “ideologically cathect” the figure of the woman one way or another, when she speaks in conversation we see how she represents both. She does not disappear

⁵² Spivak, 102. Spivak means here that as both colonial subjects and as women, women are doubly overlooked by the Western intellectual.

⁵³ Spivak, 84.

in the violent shuttling between subject-constitution and object-formation as Spivak claims, but is fully present in the normal ambiguity of human relationships.

Not only that, but Spivak's account of epistemic violence contradicts what has shown to be the constitutive role that micro-contextual instances play in the formation of ideological essentializations. She seems to suggest that these stable categories of unequal social relations are the proprietary inventions of intellectuals masquerading as absent non-representers. However, if the subaltern not only speaks, but is allowed to converse in a text, then their speech cannot be frozen into a single political interpretation. The model of the indexical order as theorized by Silverstein already fully supports the irreducible difference of subaltern subjects, fully on display yet irreducible to single-order analysis⁵⁴. It is as though the existence of a subaltern voice-consciousness was hiding the whole time in the dialectical semiotic plenitude of indexicality⁵⁵. Because speech is a process whereby interests and desires are actively constructed and negotiated, the voice of peasants and laborers in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* in the form of dialogue is not an ill-fated attempt to articulate a subaltern consciousness⁵⁶. It instead marks a pointer to a consciousness that

⁵⁴ Silverstein (2003) any micro-contextual exchanges participates in the construction of many macro-contextual ideologies of language, which dialectically feed back into other micro-contextual exchanges. They can never be analyzed as having a mere one-to-one correspondence.

⁵⁵ Silverstein, 227.

⁵⁶ Spivak, 82.

is unretrievable inasmuch as said essence is no more than an effect of dialogic speech⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ Orhan Kemal may have been alluding to this unretrievable consciousness in the following way: “I give a lot of importance to dialogue, it is not coincidental. I think it is the best way to explain what I want to explain. Instead of setting about to write long psychological analyses, I am of the belief that the dialectic of conversation will be a lot more natural and successful in doing this...Each person speaks according to their own particular social situation and limits of their culture. It’s a well-known fact that even ignorant people have their own unique language in which they contemplate things. They contemplate and they express themselves. They are not contemplating things at all in the same way that an intellectual does. They have their own special parlance...” Bezirci, 110.

Advancing Knowledge Through Intersubjective Stancetaking

3.1 Subaltern Knowledge as it is Constructed Intersubjectively

But enough about how the subaltern speaks. What does the subaltern know? Spivak dismisses attempts to center class consciousness and subjective sovereignty within a single essentialized subject and argues instead for keeping open the distinction between the two forms of representation (*Darstellung/Vertretung*) in radical practice⁵⁸. Her critique of critical theory could equally be employed against socialist realism novels. From the Soviet sphere to the Global South, works of socialist realism have centered their plots on some subaltern or proletariat's collective realization, uniting their interests and desires as subjects in the social world. According to Katerina Clark, the task of official socialist realism is as a:

generator of official myths [...] to provide object lessons in the working-out of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. As is generally true of ritual forms, the master plot personalizes the general processes outlined in Marxist-Leninist historiography by encoding them in biographical terms: the positive hero passes in stages from a state of relative "spontaneity" to a higher degree of "consciousness," which he attains by some individual revolution⁵⁹

Even though they were not subject to the demands of Soviet censorship and cultural policy, many Turkish village novels portrayed rural consciousness as deficient, in need of radical transformation. In earlier works, the epistemological gap between peasants unable to understand their objective class interests and their urban stewards, forms the central

⁵⁸ Spivak, 74.

⁵⁹ Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1981. Print. pg. 16.

conflict. In works such as *Bizim Köy* and *Yaban* the urban/enlightened vs. villager/ignorant dichotomy is established by iconic figures which stand for classes and social groupings with fixed relationships to this knowledge. Through a process of obtaining knowledge about the truth of social relations, villagers lose their former rural consciousness, thereby moving to a new position within society, which is qualitatively different from where they began.

In their essay on the “the complex and contested relations of representation through which subaltern subjectivities are constituted politically”, Mansell and Motta offer a critical reading of both Gramsci and Spivak to show that political subjectivity is not the idealized discovery of the true correspondence of a subaltern subject to their own social being, but a struggle for survival amongst “the complex relations of power that traverse the subject”⁶⁰. They critique any reductionist connection between the economic relations of production and the reproduction of political subjectivities and advocate instead for Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, whereby subjectivity results through a process of negotiating and challenging what is proposed as common-sense by the hegemonic bloc of class relations.

As for socialist realism, if author are to avoid committing the sins of re-presentation of subaltern subjectivities, they must stop imagining what knowledge it would take to transform them, or the awakening that would deliver them from playing the role of no-

⁶⁰ Mansell, Jon, and Sara C. Motta. "Re-articulating Dissent: Representing the Working Class from Third Way to New Right in Britain and Chile." *Political Studies* 61.4 (2012): 748-66. Web.

ble savages or superstitious peasants. Rather than having their characters stumble or triumph towards a higher socio-political subjectivity, which in the process validates their own political fantasies of liberation, they must depict them as individuals with their own histories, desires, and customs, which come to play a role in reevaluating their own understanding of hegemony's "common-sense".

The way that Orhan Kemal accomplishes this in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* is by relying on dialogic narration. The language of interpersonal communication has the unique ability to reflect a relationship between knowledge and subjectivity, which are mutually constitutive. In the novel we do not have characters used as fixed icons representing either a knowledge or ignorance of the nature of social relations determined by their proximity to national (read urban) culture. This knowledge is instead relative, incremental, and constructed interpersonally. The three protagonists of the novel each bring to their interactions their own personal histories and complex social dynamics. By speaking to one another during the beginning of the novel, they come to agree on whom to believe and what to do. The use of dialogue, which builds alignment between the characters through stance-taking, shows that Kemal is aware that knowledge is never expressed declaratively by individuals but is instead constructed and negotiated through the very act of speech. Nor is knowledge a discrete revelation. The characters are not given a definitive eureka moment as to the true nature of their class and its interests or the heroic meaning of their struggle in the service of social justice. Understanding the culture of ur-

ban life, the customs of social labor, and the conditions of economic injustice requires a whole repertoire of habits and practices, which are learnt and expressed precisely through speech. All of this knowledge can be encapsulated under the heading of *gurbet*, meaning “a foreign place” in Turkish, and referring more specifically to time spent working away from one’s hometown. Kemal shows us exactly how his rural characters develop and learn about the meaning of *gurbet* as both an experience and an acquiring of knowledge via a slow process of adjusting their epistemic stances to people in the streets, bosses in the factory, and women in the fields.

Recent work in sociolinguistics demonstrates that knowledge is not represented by individuals as an innate quality exclusive to them, as something held or exhibited in isolation⁶¹. It is rather enacted and performed by individuals in relation to others through stancetaking⁶². As Elise Kärkkäinen has shown through work with discourse analysis, when epistemic stances are made in conversation, they are rarely, if ever, expressed in a vacuum but rather exist as a function of advancing intersubjective understandings of situations, made between participants through the process of alignment⁶³. This is not even merely the goal of epistemic stancetaking, but the very condition of our ability as speak-

⁶¹ Du Bois, John W., and Elise Kärkkäinen. "Taking a Stance on Emotion: Affect, Sequence, and Intersubjectivity in Dialogic Interaction." *Text & Talk* 32.4 (2012): 433-51. Web.

⁶² When people speak, their speech is often accompanied by certain linguistic elements — ranging from the very explicit “I think” “I feel” to the slightest changes in intonation or pronunciation — which help to clarify the speaker’s degree of commitment to what they are saying, affectively or epistemically. For epistemic stances in particular, knowledge is rarely expressed by a speaker without some clarification as to their assuredness in the facts.

⁶³ Kärkkäinen.

ers to make them. For as DuBois states, “without intersubjectivity, subjectivity is inarticulate, incoherent, unformed”⁶⁴.

Even the foundational source of knowledge for the three protagonists in the novel is invoked intersubjectively. Kemal uses Yusuf’s uncle, who he refers to as “Emmi”, as a way to avoid the pitfalls of the enlightened-outsider trope. A brilliant narrative strategy which also allows Kemal to present a figure of the one-who-knows from within the community, Yusuf’s uncle Emmi supposedly travelled to work in the city before the three protagonists and shared his experience with Yusuf in the form of axioms, couched in vernacular language, which Yusuf repeats at strategic points in the novel.

In the beginning of the novel, while the three friends wait for the next train to take them into the city, Emmi’s advice speaks of the emotional fortitude the friends will have to show in order to bear the hardships of *gurbet*.

— Emmim derdi ki, uşaklar derdi, gurbete düştünüz mü, siz siz olun, sılayı içinizden atın derdi. Atamadınız mı yandınız derdi.	Emmi (uncle) used to say, young men, he would say, when you’ve left the village, be yourselves. Forget home. If you don’t, you’re in trouble.
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65

Notice how Emmi’s words are reenacted in the way he first explained them - “young men, he would say” - reemphasizing the conversational framework in which he first gave

⁶⁴ Du Bois, John. "The Intersubjectivity of Interaction." Paper given at the Tenth Biennial Rice University Symposium on Linguistics: ‘Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity in Interaction’, Rice University, (2004): n. Web.

⁶⁵ Kemal, 19.

his advice. Yusuf's invocation also continues to use the second-person address, "be yourselves", allowing Emmi to speak through him and directly address the two other protagonists. This demonstrates knowledge neither as passed down from some mythological source, nor as the privileged knowledge of a native informant. It is rather the most authoritative, and perhaps only truly credible form of a knowledge for most normal citizens in the modern nation: that won as a result of concrete experience and shared by Yusuf with others⁶⁶.

Yusuf serves as the best example of this incremental process of acquiring knowledge through his experiences in *gurbet*. A comparison of two parallel encounters between Yusuf and a city dweller, which come at the beginning and end of the novel, demonstrates how Orhan Kemal uses dialogic narration to depict a villager's acquisition of knowledge as gradual, relative, and interpersonal⁶⁷. Rather than being revealed some ideological truth about his objective class position, Yusuf learns about life in the city in ways that end up being anecdotal and self-serving.

For example, in the beginning of the novel, the three friends are traveling by train to Adana when they meet a man named Veli who has apparently spent considerable time in the city, and who possesses a great deal of knowledge as to its mysteries.

⁶⁶ I would like to thank Dr. Jeannette Okur for this insight.

⁶⁷ The latter section will be analyzed in section 3.3

<p>Lâkin ağam adam değil. Çifte çifte otomobili var, biner biner gider! Köse Hasan: — Nereye gider? — Şehire, bara, orospulara... Pehlivan Ali Yusuf'a döndü: — Otomobil ne ki? Yusuf birden hatırlıyamadı. Sivas'ta var mıydı? Vardı herhalde ama hatırlıyamamıştı birden. — Sen bilmezsin, dedi. Veli Yusuf'a, Ali'yi sordu: — Şehire ilk mi iniyor? — tik iniyor. — Bilmez öyleyse. Otomobilin bujisi var, direksiyonu var. Marşına bastın mı, kendi kendine işler. Bir işler ki, kancık ayı gibi! Yusuf: — Doğru, dedi. Kancık ayı ki kancık ayı!</p>	<p>But my aga (landlord) is no man. From farm to farm he's got an automobile, he gets in and goes! Beardless Hasan: —Where does he go? —To the city, to the bar, to whores...Ali the wrestler turned to Yusuf: —What the heck is an automobile? Yusuf couldn't remember right away. Were they in Sivas? There probably were but he couldn't remember right away. —You don't know, he said. Veli asked Yusuf about Ali: —First time going to the city? — <i>first</i> time going. — Then he doesn't know. An automobile has a spark plug, a steering wheel. You step on the starter, it works itself. Works like, as good as a <i>whore</i> Yusuf: —It's true, he said. A whore, a whore!</p>
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68

The contrast is clear here between Ali and Hasan's questions on the one hand, neither of whom have ever been to the city, and Yusuf's crafty answers on the other. When asked directly by Ali what an automobile is, Yusuf deflects by letting Veli fill in the details. After Veli's explanation, Yusuf then chimes in affirming the statement with the epistemic stance, "It is true". Without having to offer any information of his own, Yusuf is able to align himself with Veli's knowledge through his epistemic stances.

This pattern continues throughout the initial conversation between Veli and the three friends.

⁶⁸ Kemal, 28-9.

<p>Ali'nin aklına yatmamıştı: — Nasıl işler? Veli: — Kendi kendine işler. Benzini tükendi mi işlemez, töbe işlemez. Marşına istediğin kadar bas, hava. O zaman ne marş kâr eder, ne kolçak! Yusuf gene karıştı: — Doğru. Ne marş, ne kolçak..</p>	<p>Ali couldn't figure it out. —How does it work? Veli: —It works by itself. Without gas it won't run, I swear it won't work. You can press on the pedal as much as you want, air. In that case neither the pedal, nor pushing helps Yusuf joined in again: —True. Neither the pedal, nor pushing..</p>
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69

The author also references the wide range of verbal and gestural signs that can be used to take epistemic stances, besides the explicit “I think.” Yusuf displays his epistemic affirmation of Veli’s information not only by saying “true” and “Yeah, I knew that”, but also by nodding and raising his voice in exclamation— which can be inferred, as his are the only lines marked in the text with an exclamation point. This statement of agreement only benefits Yusuf by letting him display his knowledge of city life. His affirmation of the seemingly fantastical information shared by Veli about how a car works helps to convince the other two friends of its veracity. Yusuf’s role in the conversation is crucial in acting as the bridge between the participants in the conversation, who begin without knowledge of cars, and Veli, who possesses that knowledge. Yusuf’s various acts of stancetaking, taken in turns throughout the conversation, forms the central role in engendering epistemic alignment.

3.2 Urban Knowledge as Practical Consciousness Rather than Revelation

Another early example of this dialogically constructed knowledge in the three friends’ early encounters in the city has to do directly with their “identity” as villagers, a

⁶⁹ Kemal, 29.

symbol of solidarity with others from the same village. The friends come to Adana hoping to find their compatriot (*hemşire*), someone from their same set of villages who has apparently found success in the big city, and whom they can ask for work. They are accustomed to this type of patronage, whereby they can curry favor and rely on fellow villagers. Indeed, their entire initial plan on arriving in Adana depends on being able to get work from this villager-turned factory-boss. However, they soon find that the culture of the city and its practices of patronage are far more impersonal and ruthless than those in the village. When they show up at the gates and see other workers waiting at the factory of their *hemşire*, they ask what's going on.

<p>— Siz hangi köyden olursunuz? Arkadaşlarını gösterdi: — Dördümüz Yıldızeli'den. Bunlar da Karagöl'den. Lâkin harçlığımız da tükendi. Şaşırdık kaldık... — Demek işe girmek çetin? — Ne diyorsun kardaş! Yusuf arkadaşlarına baktı, göz kırptı. — Fabrika sahibi adamın hemşerisi olmalı ki! Yere isteksizlikle tüküren Yıldızeli'li: — Kulak asma, dedi. Hemşerin de olsa... şehire göçüp de tüylendi mi, bırak...</p>	<p>—What village are you all from? Pointing to his friends: —The four of us are from Yıldızeli. Those guys are from Karagöl. But we ran out of our spending money. Caught us by surprise we got stuck here... —So that means getting work is tough? —What are you saying brother! Yusuf looked at his friends, giving a wink. —The factory boss's gotta be someone's compatriot! The man from Yıldızeli spat reluctantly on the ground: —Forget about him, he said. Even if he is someone's compatriot...he moved to the city and he's rich now, forget it...</p>
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70

The laborer at the factory gates, presumably now accustomed to the ways of the city and wage labor, advises the three newcomers that the bonds of place matter little in the city

⁷⁰ Kemal, 18.

where the only important relationships are economic ones. This scene is at the same time an example of the ways in which social customs in the city are different, and on the value of one's identity as a villager in a new political context where there is a more expansive network of social relations that negates the bonds formed in the village. When a villager breaks out of his isolation and enters into a social economy, his shift in political understanding is in fact this adaptation to new social practices. This is exactly what is seen with Yusuf and the other two friends interactions throughout the novel. They learn new habits of thought and new approaches to stancetaking, which allow them to succeed in the exploitative environment of the wage labor economy. At each step Orhan Kemal privileges the use of dialogue in order to showcase how the act of acquiring knowledge for his protagonists is not an ideological telos for socialist heroes, but a strategy for performative speech as the basic requirement for survival. After not being able to find their way into the factory past the throngs of other laborers by using their personal connection to the factory boss, the three friends find the opportunity to confront their compatriot directly as he comes to the factory in his chauffeured car. Yusuf will invoke certain identities through speech to his advantage.

<p>Yere diz verip kalkan Yusuf fabrika sahibine koştu. Adam geniş kenarlı fötr şapkası, lâcivert elbiseleri, ruğan iskarpinleriyle arabasından inmekteydi. Yusuf ayaklarına kapandı, az kalsın öpecekti:</p> <p>— Ağam ağam, kurban ağam...</p> <p>— Ne o lan? Ne iştiyorsun? Sapsarı Yusuf titriyordu:</p> <p>— Ç. köyünden oluruz, hemşeriyiz seninle. Allah sana uzun ömürler versin, nâmını sânını duyduk da geldik. Köylümüz değil ya, bizim sancakta olur dedik inanmadılar, dögdüler bizi, kovdular...</p>	<p>Yusuf pushed himself up off the ground with his knee and ran over to the factory owner. The man was wearing a wide-brimmed fedora hat, a purple suit, patent leather shoes, and was getting out of his car. Yusuf fell down at his feet, and almost kissed them:</p> <p>— My lord, I'll sacrifice everything for you, my lord...</p> <p>— What the hell is this? What do you want? Yusuf had turned completely pale and was shaking:</p> <p>— We're from Ch. village. We are your compatriots. May God give you long life. We heard of your great name and we came. We told them you were not from our village, but from our district, but they didn't believe us. They bea' us, tried to get rid of us...</p>
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71

Yusuf invokes their similar origins with the term *hemşire* along with a long string of reverential language. What is convincing for the factory boss, however, is not Yusuf's flattery but another aspect of his speech.

<p>Yusuf'un konuşmasından hemşeri köylüler olduklarını anlayan fabrika sahibi, üzerinde durmadı. Yıllar vardı memleketten, köyünden ayrılah. Sonra ne? Ayrılmasa bile doğduğu köye çeşme yaptırmıştı, yol yaptırmıştı, çocuk okutuyordu. Başka ne yapabilirdi?</p>	<p>The factory owner realized from the way Yusuf spoke that they were from villages in the same district, but he didn't dwell on it. It has been years since he'd left his home, his village. And what of it? Even though he had left, he had funded the construction of a fountain in the village, he had made a road, he was sending children to school. What else could he do?</p>
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72

Even if the factory owner claims to not dwell on the fact that Yusuf is from the same district, Yusuf's identity is proven by his speech style, and the factory owner in the end is persuaded by a sense of guilt and responsibility for his village to listen to the demands of the three men. He ends up sending them to his foreman for work. Thus, village culture

⁷¹ Kemal, 66.

⁷² Kemal, 66.

can be invoked through interpersonal interactions and cause individuals to reenact older social customs. Rather than being a retroactive form of social consciousness, it represents a practice with the ability to counteract the hegemony of urban culture.

However, urban culture along with its imposition of a common-sense attitude, the cynical transaction of wage labor, soon returns once the three friends reach the factory floor. The foreman lets the three friends know that it is the custom in the factory for each one of the workers to give a fraction of their wages to the foreman as a tip.

<p>— Tamam. Haftadan haftaya ne zaman alacaksınız paracıklarımız...</p> <p>— ...</p> <p>— ... vereceksiniz bana hak, ırgatbaşı hakkı! Yusuf'un kuluncundan soğuk bir titreme geçti. Kuru avurdundaki yara yerini kaşıyarak arkadaşlarına baktı. Aklına hemen emmisi gelivermişti: «Siz siz olun, şehir uşağına tav olmayın!»</p> <p>Gene de sordu:</p> <p>— Kaç kuruş vereceğiz?</p> <p>— Gönlünüzden ne koparsa. Çünkü yok muhtaçlığımız ameleye. Deseydim değil lâzım amele, kovarlardı sizi!</p>	<p>— Alright. And from week to week when you get your money...</p> <p>— ...?</p> <p>— ...you'll give a little bit to me. It's the foreman's right!</p> <p>Yusuf felt a cold shudder in his shoulder. He looked at his friends, scratching the sore on the inside of his dry cheek. Right away, he remembered his Emmi: "Be yourselves, and don't get a temper with city folk!"</p> <p>But he couldn't help asking:</p> <p>— How much will we give?</p> <p>— However much is in your hearts. Because we don't have a need for more workers. If I said so they'd throw y'all out!</p>
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73

Always trying to follow his uncle Emmi's advice, Yusuf holds back. But Ali is quick to respond to this extortion, attempting to invoke the name of their compatriot, the factory owner, as Yusuf had before, hoping it will work the same magic. It does not.

⁷³ Kemal, 70.

<p>Pehlivan Ali pat diye atıverdi: — İyi amma, buranın sahibi bizim hemşerimiz! Irgatbaşı hırsla döndü Pehlivana: — Yok burda hemşeri memşeri. Fabrika burası. Ağa karışmaz işimize bizim. Bizden sorulur ah- valleri fabrikanın!</p>	<p>Ali the wrestler shot out: — Yeah but the owner here is our compatriot! The foreman turned angrily to the wrestler: — There’s no such thing as a compatriot here. This is a factory. The owner doesn’t interfere with our work. He’s the one asking me about the conditions in the factory!</p>
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74

In short, the foreman makes clear that relationships on the factory floor will be carried out through labor relations rather than according to any previous forms of solidarity. While the factory boss may have been able to recall these older social customs of patronage, the appeal to this concept of belonging to the village is ineffective with the foreman. This is because compatriotism is not an objective form of class solidarity which can be actualized once the villagers escape isolation, but a specific practice unique to a specific region of villages. In these three exchanges where it is invoked, we see how Yusuf wields the concept of compatriotism affectively to inspire alignment in interpersonal interactions, rather than as a way to build political alliances. The use of language in the novel allows the reader to see how a villager’s understanding of class and social belonging is not something that can undergo one simple binary shift, but is rather a complex negotiation of multiple social dynamics — even if these dynamics center around the meaning of a single word like “*hemşire*” — played out through interpersonal interactions. In the same way that Gramsci would argue that socio-political subjectivity is constituted by

⁷⁴ Kemal, 69-70.

processes and struggles over the relations of power⁷⁵, the speakers in this novel construct subjectivity as a relationship to knowledge through stancetaking, which is inherently interactively organized⁷⁶.

3.3 Performing Epistemological Transformations

By way of a final example of the incremental and dialogically expressed forms of knowledge made through Yusuf's shifting epistemic stances, towards the end of the novel, he speaks with an agent at the train station where he has arrived to board a train headed back to his village. In the interim, he has had many experiences in the city and in the workplace, and has even obtained the professional artisanal qualification of master mason (duvar ustası). He starts the conversation with the ticket agent, and leads the conversation by asking all of the questions. When asked questions himself, he responds initially with a question in an attempt to reestablish his dominant position in their turn taking, as is seen below.

Birden sordu: — Sen hangi köyden olursun? İstasyon memuru, burnunun altında ufacık bıyığıyla kocaman bir tilki, güldü: — Üstü açık köyden! Yusuf şöyle bir düşündü, sonra: — Üstü örtük köy olur mu? — Olmaz mı? — Olur mu? — Sen hangi köyden olursun? — Ben mi? Ben Ç. köyünden olurum.	Suddenly he asked: —What village are you from? The station agent, was a great fox with that tiny moustache underneath his nose, he smiled: — From an open-top village! Yusuf thought for a moment, and then asked: —Is there such thing as a covered—top village? —Can't there be? —Can there be? —What village are you from? —Me? I'm from Ch. village. (362-63)
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⁷⁵ Mansell and Mota.

⁷⁶ Kärkkäinen, 711.

In addition to his use of questions to assert dominance in the conversation, Yusuf is also much more verbose than when he first left his village. He uses much longer sentences, which often involve answering his own rhetorical questions, and more frequent epistemic markers. He explains to the station agent his story, the unfortunate demise of his two friends, and the reasons he believes he succeeded in *gurbet*.

<p>Ben de açtım gözümü. Usta oldum. Niye? Şöyle bir vurdum zihnime, Yusuf dedim, köyden şehire ne demiye indin? İş güç sahibi olup, iyi kötü için beşin yoluna bakmak için. Köye varınca köylünü kendine güldürme. Ahdettim, duvar ustalığımı belledim!</p>	<p>I kept alert. I became a master. Why? I drilled it into my head. Yusuf I said, why did you leave the village and come to the city? To get some work, to deal with the good and the bad in order to get somewhere. Once you get back to the village don't let them laugh at you. I made a vow to myself, and I learned masonry!</p>
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Yusuf links his survival to obtaining knowledge of masonry, a skill he consciously decided to master and which will give him a degree of prestige when he returns to his village, and to his abstention from the vices that led Ali astray. Yusuf refers directly to his epistemic state in this paragraph, both when he realizes his purpose for coming to the city (“I drilled it into my head.”, literally “I struck my brain”), and when he describes his mastery of masonry. In this sense, one could say that Yusuf’s stancetaking is meta-epistemic. He understands the benefits of this type of practical knowledge, both for his fate as a worker

⁷⁷ Kemal, 360.

⁷⁸ Kemal, 362-3.

and for his position in society. The complex negotiation of status and epistemic stance-taking continues as the two men go to a cafe to chat, and even in the very act of walking inside.

<p>Kantinin kahve kapısında durdular. Matrak memur yol verdi saygıyla: — Buyur usta! Yusuf «Usta» sözüne memnun, gene de: — Yooook, dedi. — Niye? — Büyüklük Allaha mahsus! — Canım koskoca bir ustanın şimdi. Sen dururken benim önce girmem yakışık alır mı? — Canım sen de koskoca bir memursun... — Olsun. Ustaların hali başka. Buyur! Yusuf: — Her usta benim gibi mi olur? dedi. Adımını besmeleyle attı, girdi. Memur da ardından.</p>	<p>They stopped at the door of the train station cafe. The wisecracking official respectfully moved aside for him. —After you, master! Yusuf was pleased by the word master, . Even so, he said: — Noooo. — Why? — Greatness is reserved for God! — My dear, you are a great master now. Is it fitting me for me to enter first when you are here? -My dear ,you are also a great official... -So what? Being a master is different. Be my guest! Yusuf said: — Is every master like me? -He took a step, whispering, “In the name of God”, then entered. The official followed him.</p>
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79

Any reader familiar with ostensible invitations, and the effectiveness of religious posturing will be able to decipher the insincerity in this exchange, and will be able to understand the gap between Yusuf’s belief that he has won the respect of a city resident due to his newly obtained knowledge, and the annoyance and disdain of the station agent who considers him to be a self-aggrandizing yokel. Although it turns out that Yusuf uses knowledge to try to win respect in the city, it is not in the way one would imagine for a socialist realist protagonist. Power relations between classes, negotiated based on claims to knowledge, are being shown through interpersonal dynamics rather than through hero-

⁷⁹ Kemal, 363.

ic scenes of class conflict. Yusuf believes he has won his rights for respect by what he has learned, but he has done so in the field of social decorum rather than class struggle.⁸⁰

While in the café, Yusuf continues to ramble on, using a mix of folk sayings, personal anecdotes, and conceited boasts to make epistemic stances about what he has learned from his time in gurbet. Once having taken to heart the words of his uncle Emmi, Yusuf now demonstrates a knowledge which, he believes, exceeds that of his uncle.

<p>— Emmi demek baba demek. Gözümü açtım emmimi gördüm ya, şimdi emmimi mümmümü geçtim tekmil. Karşıma geçse de böyle böyle dese, sus emmi derim. Sen gurbette eline mala bak, ben aldım, seni geçtim! Cıgarasını tazeledi: — Duvar ustası olsunlar ya, okuma yazmayı da mücerret bellesinler. Ben köy yerinde A'yı bilmezdim meselâ! — Şimdi? — Eh, bir az bir az yakıştıyorum a, insan okuyunca gazeteyi mazeteyi sökmeli. Kitap okumalı, gürül gürül. Okuma yazma gibi var mı?</p>	<p>- Emmi is the same as a father. I was ambitious and did what my uncle told me to. Now I've passed my uncle shmuncle completely. If our paths cross and he says do this, do that to me, I'll tell him, be quiet Emmi.. You focus on making money while in gurbet. I made mine, I've surpassed you! He freshened his cigarette: -Well if they are mason masters, then they should at least know how to read and write on their own. When I was in the village I didn't know the letter "A", for example. - And now? - Well, slowly I'm working out the letter a. When a person reads they should read magazines and things like that. They should read books, and lots of them. Is there anything like being able to read and write?</p>
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81

The knowledge one gains in the city is not, as the overeager intellectual would imagine, the key to class consciousness and liberation, but a practical means for personal advancement. That is not to dismiss its value. Urban manners can lead the way to social advancement and literacy provides hope for entering the petit-bourgeoisie. After all, Yusuf's

⁸⁰ That is not to say that class is not a factor in determining who gets to go through the door first.

⁸¹ Kemal, 364.

stated goal at the beginning of the novel was not to liberate his fellow man, but rather to become a modern consumer through the purchase of his very own gas stove.

Yusuf displays this sense of pride and accomplishment in this conversation at having advanced in his social position. But he is driven out of his snide complacency when the station agent suddenly tells Yusuf off, telling him not to bring his children to the city, that “you’ve dirtied up this city enough!” (Şehiri pislettiğiniz yeter!⁸²) What Yusuf has not realized is that his lofty urban ambitions have been betrayed by markers in his speech, which continue to index him as a member of the rural peasantry. His dialogue in this selection is an expertly crafted blend of epistemic self-aggrandizement and stubbornly vernacular speech. In fact, the cultural divisions between the city and the country, the antagonism between different trades and classes, the internalized transformation of one individual who has taken the initiative to conform to urban social customs in order to make a name for himself, all are condensed into the speech of Yusuf. He is not a subject who has firmly passed into the realm of the hegemonic national consciousness of modern republican Turkey, but still an individual who reflects an uneven incorporation of ideas and behaviors. And the ways in which he reflects hegemonic ideology is not through didactic pronouncements, but in his casual boasting and desire for consumer goods. This is because, as Raymond Williams states:

⁸² Kemal, 364.

[hegemony is] the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living ... of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships.⁸³

Orhan Kemal uses conversational speech as a form of representation — already attuned to the interpersonal construction of knowledge — to further show how hegemonies of thought do not wholly transform subjects, but are interwoven into their speech and acts. Orhan Kemal was committed to representing characters through dialogue as way to express their psychologies more succinctly than pages full of explanations could⁸⁴. But these psychologies are not something essential — hidden within each person as a discrete identity. This consciousness Kemal sought to explain exists instead out in the open in the lived experience of each person in relationships with the social world.

⁸³ Williams, 110.

⁸⁴ “Ben bol dialoglarımla kabuktan derinlere inmek, yani ruh tahlilleri yapmak istiyorum. Üç beş konuşma, çoğu sefer sayfalar dolusu izahın yerini tutmalıdır.” Bezirci, 57.

Conclusion: Subaltern and Narratological Silences

The novel ends with Yusuf returning to his village torn between the excitement of seeing his family, and the dread of having to deliver the news of his companions' deaths. On the road into town he wonders to himself about his own responsibility towards the men he took with him on *gurbet*, and imagines what their families will look like after all this time. It seems as though some climactic moral conflict is brewing in Yusuf's mind. But this train of thought is interrupted when he sees his own daughter at the town fountain. She rushes to take him to his wife, and they are soon reunited. Yusuf greets his wife with gas stove in hand, and the last major exchange of dialogue shows him lecturing her on how it works. In this exchange Yusuf brims with epistemological certainty, all of his new knowledge on full display for his incredulous wife. But the mood quickly turns when Beardless Hasan's daughter shows up at the door.

<p>Yusuf donmuş kalmıştı. Elindeki gazocağına korkuyla baktı. Gözlerinden karaltılar geçti. Sonra kendini toparlıyarak, Köse Hasan'ın kızına: — Gel, dedi. İmne, gel. Buban dedi ki, köye varırsan, İmne'nin kara gözlerinden bi güzel öp dedi ki!</p> <p>Yusuf emmisinin pırlıl pırlıl gazocağından gözlerini ayıramıyan Emine: — Bubam ne diye gelmedi ya? diye sordu. Yusuf'un gözleri büsbütün karardı. Gazocağı elinden düştü. Başka bir şey konuşulmadı.</p>	<p>Yusuf stood there frozen. He looked apprehensively at the gas stove. His eyes grew dark. Then, pulling himself together, he said to Beardless Hasan's daughter: — Come, he said, Imne, come. Your daddy said, once you get to the village, give Imne a kiss on her black eyes, he said! Emine, who could not take her eyes off of uncle Yusuf's shiny gas stove asked: — Why didn't daddy come? Yusuf's eyes darkened completely. The gas stove fell from his hand. Nothing else was spoken.</p>
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85

⁸⁵ Kemal, 376.

Nothing more is heard from Yusuf. In the remaining paragraphs of the novel, Hasan's daughter is asked by Ali the wrestler's mother for news of their men. She shrugs and continues walking. It seems as though no one has anything left to say. The reader will never know how Yusuf will deal with the deaths of his friends, and how he will reconcile his new knowledge back in the village. The meaning of the three friends' death is left unspoken.

This is an intentionally anti-climactic ending for a novel sold as being a tribute to the unjust conditions of the rural proletariat. *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*, does not provide a final analysis of what the experience of the villagers means, who they are, or what they know. It refuses to say these things. Perhaps it was this lack of a satisfying conclusion that made the leftist critic Asım Bezirci call *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* unfocused, random, and technically weak⁸⁶. Nor does an enlightened foil or an assuring narrative voice affirm that something is missing or unresolved in the plot. Had Orhan Kemal used the traditional position of the-one-who-knows to organize his narrative, it would be at this point where dramatic irony would overwhelm the simple ending of the novel with its sense of tragic disappointment: Poor Yusuf! He had the chance to unite in the struggle for the international rural proletariat, and all he got was that lousy gas stove!

Yusuf's inability to speak at the end of the novel is explicit, but the rest of the novel has also displayed strategic uses of silence. The reader has had the words and acts

⁸⁶ Bezirci.

of Kemal's characters as they negotiate their identity, fight for their social positions, and develop an understanding of a new social world, but almost completely without comment, analysis, or judgment. The narrator has done his best to say as little as possible. This absence of an explicit analysis points to the one possibility that Spivak allows for the subaltern to speak: the measuring of silences and what the work *cannot* say. When the intellectual and the politician are not busy speaking on behalf of the oppressed and unrepresented, she suggests we can sometimes catch unmediated glimpses of the latter within the margins. Spivak claims that the unclaimed acts of subaltern insurgency may still serve as their historical trace.

The historian, transforming 'insurgency' into a 'text for knowledge', is only one receiver of any collectively intended social act. With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin, the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her own consciousness (or consciousness-effect, as operated by disciplinary training) so that the elaboration of the insurgency, package with an insurgent consciousness, does not freeze into "object of investigation", or, worse yet, a model for imitation. The subject; implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counter possibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subjects in the dominant groups.⁸⁷

In order to privilege dialogic speech, and thereby give what he believed to be the most realistic portrait of the peasantry, Kemal wrote himself out of his work. He did not rely on an autonomous narrative voice positioned outside of the realm of interactions between characters to organize his work. He instead placed the reader "face to face" with the sub-

⁸⁷ Spivak, 82.

altern by simulating at great length their conversational speech⁸⁸. The reader is seldom granted access to the characters' inner thoughts, and when they are, those thoughts mirror their spoken speech. To Orhan Kemal's contemporaries, the dialogue in *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* sounded coarse and vulgar, most likely because few Turkish authors had included extended sequences of village dialect in their writing before he did. Other complained that his work did not serve a cause. Could this have been an acknowledgement that Kemal's dialogue was in fact a collection of raw material, not yet polished into "a text for knowledge" as Spivak calls it? Is it possible that a fictional recreation, out of its fidelity to the genre of reportage and the dialectic of conversation, could succeed in delivering a package of insurgent consciousness in the form of dialogic speech? Given its great productivity in indexing multiple orders of social meaning, and in staging diverse positions of relational knowledge, it is naive to suggest otherwise. Dialogic speech is as explosive and unruly of a force as insurgency itself.

⁸⁸ As for the contention that the dialogue in the novel is all fabricated, not actually the speech of the subaltern, but merely the creation of Orhan Kemal's imagination, any suggestions for demarcating the line which divides authenticity from performance in human speech are welcomed.

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