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ARTICLE

Maternal slavery and Gothic melancholy in Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan's *Vâlidem* (My Mother) and Mihrünnisa Hanım's counterpoetics

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Abstract

Late Ottoman writers whose mothers were formerly enslaved were haunted by the mother's arrested mourning for her lost mother/land in the Caucasus. "Intimate biofiction" by these writers – potential masters and sons of slaves – offers a unique narratorial point of view distinct from first-person slave narratives and third-person abolitionist literature. Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan's long narrative elegy, *Vâlidem* (My Mother), written at the time of her death around 1897 and published with a sequel in 1913, triangulates the mother/land, the father/land, and the son on his diplomatic and exilic itinerary. In Ottoman Turkish and *aruz* meter, Hamid imagines the melancholic crypt of the mother, the paradigmatic child of Gothic literature who remains undead – a phantom haunting her own progeny. In a melancholic inversion of loss, Circassia is reincarnated as the mother/land who lost her. Hamid's mother is resurrected in a sequel to give birth to the sons of the new fatherland. Her narrative overwritten once again, the same mother appears in Mihrünnisa Hanım's counterpoetics alongside the nanny who stayed. The metonymic chain of exilic replacement mothers extends even to Hamid's last, teenage bride from Belgium.

Keywords: Ottoman literature; slavery; Gothic literature; mothers; melancholy; Tanzimat literature

Introduction

The age-old tradition among affluent Ottoman families of purchasing women as domestic slaves, some of whom could achieve upward mobility through marriage, often with their own masters, means that these women's sons were both potential masters and sons of formerly enslaved persons. Within the corpus of what might be called late Ottoman anti-slavery literature, a subset is written by such men. Though noticed by some scholars, this subset's myriad and potent implications remain unexplored even in the few works devoted to the subject (Parlatır 1992; Sagaster 1997). Among writers whose mothers were former slaves are towering figures of late Ottoman literature who were simultaneously statesmen or officials: Ahmet Midhat (1844–1912), whose sheer productivity established the genre of the novel in the

Ottoman Empire, and whose mother is often assumed to have been a slave;[1] Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan (1852–1937), "the Great Poet" (*şair-i azam*) and playwright bridging the Empire with the Turkish Republic; Sami Paşazade Sezai (1859–1936), known as a pioneer of the modern short story in Turkish; Sezai's nephew Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver (1885–1966), an orator, poet, and pillar of Turkish nationalism; and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974), one of the most important late Ottoman and Republican writers of fiction and memoir, whose mother's background is elided by critics.[2] These writers are indeed haunted by their inherited trauma of maternal kidnapping, enslavement, and displacement, which they persistently narrate in their works. Enmeshed in the mother's melancholy and emotional unavailability, they find themselves struggling with her own mourning for her lost mother, motherland, and mother tongue.

The exilic status of the formerly enslaved mother is triangulated by those of the father and the son. The father himself has roots in the provinces and/or diplomatic posts far from his household in the imperial center. A third exilic state ensues from the sons' own appointment to the provinces, Europe, or the Caucasus as diplomats and officials. Potential masters like the father, and mouthpieces of the imperial state, these writers are on the defense against the military onslaught and moral upper hand of "abolitionist" Europe. Their divided loyalties occasion ambivalent filial, sexual, or paternal attitudes toward the literary character of the slave girl – a shadow of the mother from her many lives. Their works preserve the slave girl as an object of desire only through some artificial subterfuge of consent whereby she gives her "love" to the master. They deliver the symbolic mother from slavery to holy matrimony, thus guaranteeing her survival, the birth of her future sons, and her manumission.[3] Alternately, they sacrifice her in a matricide, killing the mother who was internalized without the necessary work of mourning.

Works by writers who profoundly identify with the Empire but also channel the formerly enslaved mother's melancholy contribute a unique narratorial point of view to slavery studies. Distinct from both first-person slave narratives or testimonies and third-person sentimental white abolitionist writing, this point of view spatially inscribes a symbolic identification with both the mother/land and the father/land. Case in point, Abdülhak Hamid, best known as the poet of death, wrote his *mersiye* (elegy), *Vâlidem* (My Mother), around 1897, and published it with

[1] A long line of scholars, starting with Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1988 [1956], 291), imply or assume that Ahmet Midhat's mother was a former *cariye* (enslaved woman) partly because her wartime displacement as a pregnant refugee with a child in tow bears comparison. This is not corroborated by the author, his family, or his biographers, although there are competing accounts of her background in the Caucasus.

[2] Although Yakup Kadri relays the background of his mother, İkbal, in *Anamın Kitabı* ("Mom's Book"), he more freely refers to the (past) status of other (former) cariyes in the household. In a monograph on Yakup Kadri, his friend Hasan Ali Yücel (1989 [1957], 20) elucidates İkbal's upbringing in the Egyptian court as a future *odalık* (enslaved concubine) and potential wife, but other critics have overlooked the matter to this date. Gradually impoverished, nostalgic, and prone to shame in her second marriage, İkbal is widely considered an aristocrat.

[3] The birth of a cariye's child, born free, guaranteed that the mother could not be sold, and would be manumitted after her master's death. However, paternity could always be denied, especially by the heirs of the master; she could be collateral for the master's remaining debt, or married off away from her child (Zilfi 2010, 112).

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a sequel in 1913.[4] Alongside Hamid's numerous plays in verse where slavery plays a non-negligible role, this long narrative poem eulogizes the poet's mother, Münteha, and the motherland, Circassia, exploiting the familial exilic triangulation to inspect maternal slavery (Tarhan 2019, 309–339). Evoking both his mother's heritage of oral literature in the bucolic Caucasus and his father's pedigree as a historian, Hamid, a late nineteenth-century Ottoman Romantic poet, now reconfigures the European Gothic in Ottoman Turkish and *aruz* meter. The mother is first immortalized as an illiterate prodigy and a survivor of enslavement, then resurrected as the new motherland, to deliver both the poet and the Empire. Cast as the paradigmatic child of Gothic literature whose natural resourcefulness contrasts sharply with her profound melancholy, she carries the inscrutable crypt of her lost mother/land, which can only be re-imagined throughout the poem as the land that lost her. The aging mother altogether resigns from life and refuses eye surgery. She pretends to return others' love but prefers the company of "spirits" of bygone times and places. This melancholic demeanor is only mirrored in the poet's own communing with the spirit of his mother, "that greatest beloved."

Deadened to her own life, the mother returns to haunt her own progeny in death: as per the absence of clear endings and closure in the Gothic, the sequel of the poem, "Vâlidemin Zeyli" ("My Mother, Continued"), allegorizes the Empire as a replacement mother, a motherland coming alive only to give birth to the sons of the new fatherland.[5] United, the new fatherland overwrites the maternal narrative of enslavement and exile, encrypting, in turn, her past of slavery in a paternal narrative of imperial liberation. Hamid's poem thus becomes a convoluted attempt to elevate the formerly enslaved mother to visibility. However, Hamid is not alone in his quest, as the mother brings together others like her. The poet's sister, Mihrünnisa Hanım, herself a poet, also commemorates both their mother and their nanny – an enslaved person from the Caucasus who "stayed" to raise Abdülhak Hamid's son. A closer look at the network of women in the siblings' world shows that this metonymic chain of replacement mothers starts with the imagined grandmother left bereft in the Caucasus and extends to the enslaved nanny, to the mother's fellow seafarer (herself a former slave who becomes Mihrünnisa's mother-in-law), to Hamid's first, orphaned wife, and, arguably, to his last, teenage bride from Belgium. Their permutations of exile, orphanhood, and servitude create new hierarchies as well as a subtext of women's voices.

The unique aspects of Ottoman intimate biofiction on maternal slavery

Critical theory has problematized sentimentality in white abolitionist literature on account of the author–reader superiority over the character of the slave and the

[4] All English translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Transliterations into the Latin alphabet of Hamid's works are by Enginün (Tarhan 1995; Tarhan 2013; Tarhan 2019); those of Mihrünnisa Hanım's poems are by Gürbüz (2020). *Vâlidem* appeared as a book shortly after preliminary partial and complete publications (Tarhan 2019, 311, 364).

[5] Although the dyad motherland/fatherland is not directly translatable, *anavatan*/*memleket* could be considered an approximation. Furthermore, for "mother" and derivative words, Ottoman Turkish incorporates words from Turkish, Arabic, and Persian: *ana* (*anne*), *vâlide*, *ümm*, *mâder*.

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fantasy of amelioration rather than political emancipation. In fact, the analysis of slave narratives and abolitionist literature becomes a building block in affect theory, trauma theory, theories of the novel, and translation studies (Ahern 2016; Berlant 2004; Brodzki 2007; Carey 2019; Cohen 1999; Festa 2006; Samuels 1992). Although archival work seeks to mitigate the dearth of first-person accounts of slavery, it is also faced with mediation in the transcription and publication of slave testimonies and narratives, as in the case of Sudanese slaves rescued by Christian missionaries, or the effort to reconstruct slaves' life narratives from archival documents (Powell 2012; Toledano 2007; Zilfi 2010). Reconstructing the first-person accounts of women in contexts of genocide and slavery proves especially difficult (Hartman 2007; Sharpe 2010; Stoler 2002; Whitlock 2000). Nevertheless, archival sources of slave testimonies are invaluable in revealing multiplicity and hybridity at the source (Aljoe 2012; White and Burnard 2020). Trauma studies, too, grapple with the complexity of point of view and intergenerational disorders in mass trauma, not only of victims and witnesses, but also of perpetrators (and their descendants) (Felman and Laub 1992; Gilmore 2017; Schwab 2010).

That the subject position is all important in accounts of slavery can be gleaned from the late Ottoman context as well. Although a great many writers foreground slavery,[6] "intimate biofiction" by writers whose mothers were former slaves remains a uniquely charged, lifelong commitment. Also, by contrast, courtly relationships between figures of authority and sometimes equally powerful, nominal "slaves," as reflected in classical Ottoman poetry, demonstrate a metaphysical grayscale rather than a stark master–slave dichotomy (Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005). Indeed, as also nostalgically reflected by memoirs of courtly slaves, their initial slave status can evolve into expansive power and affluence (Argit 2020; Brookes 2008; Saz 2004). Nevertheless, the devastating spike in slavery in the mid- to late nineteenth century points to the reality of domestic slavery outside the court, which became part of late Ottoman writers' lived experience. As such, Ottoman intimate biofiction is faced with the same limits ascribed to biofiction and autobiography in addressing colonialism and gender inequality (Lackey 2022; Smith and Watson 1998). Like "filiation narratives" that arose in the 1980s in France (Viart 2019),[7] Ottoman intimate biofiction materializes to reincarnate ascendants in a particular literary–historical context.

Despite their personal investment in the plight of slavery, Ottoman writers whose mothers had been formerly enslaved remain ambivalent participants in the already paradoxical anti-slavery discourse of modernity. According to Joel Quirk (2011), the global abolitionist project resulted not from the age-old, worldwide practices of slavery but from the unprecedented scope of the suffering inflicted by the Atlantic

[6] At the time of writing, my list of such writers includes Ziya Paşa, Emin Nihat, Namık Kemal, Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, Zafer Hanım, Nabizade Nazım, Fatma Aliye, her sister Emine Semiye, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil, Abdülhalim Memduh, Selma Rıza, Halide Edib Adıvar, Şahabeddin Süleyman, İzzet Melih Devrim, Nezihe Muhiddin, and Hayriye Melek Hunç. Those with a less certain maternal lineage happen to focus on male slaves or slaves from Europe, which suggests the absence of a maternal connection.

[7] Dominique Viart theorizes on an emergent constellation of works marked by postmodern disillusionment and resulting from the writers' investigative, non-novelistic, and fragmented quest of their ascendants' (particularly fathers') lives.

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slave trade, which legally and racially codified the enslavement of a homogeneous group. However, even in the British Empire, where public opinion demanded abolition despite a still highly profitable slave trade, the aim was not equality but rather a British (then European) exceptionalism. The British Protestant nationalist ideology of individual rights and freedom enabled the rise of capitalism but condemned slavery – a "stark and solvable" problem, unlike poverty or war (Quirk 2011, 44). Ultimately, the anti-slavery project was instrumental in justifying worldwide European colonialism. Comparably, pre-revolutionary eighteenth-century French literary representations of slavery remained reluctant to engage with slavery in the colonies, giving short shrift to Enlightenment notions of freedom and equality (Dobie 2010, 296–310).

In turn, the few works of the Enlightenment that were translated into Ottoman Turkish – a fact overlooked in the perennial "Classics Debate"[8] – circle around enslavement, evoking concubinage, indentured labor, kidnapping, and metaphorical "shackles." Few as these works are, most of them were translated more than once, as in the case of Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (1731) and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788). On the other hand, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé* (1879) seem to have gone untranslated, although they were well known by Ottoman intellectuals, perhaps precisely due to their overt abolitionism or focus on Ottoman slavery. Nor can it simply be assumed that the advent of the genre of the novel in the Empire was necessary or sufficient to expound such politically sensitive subjects as slavery. Hamid's narrative elegy, *Vâlidem*, as well as Mevlana's *Mesnevi* and Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme*, demonstrate the availability of pre-existent Ottoman genres that can serve the purpose. Nevertheless, the relationship between the birth of the novel and the modern family is part and parcel of a new cross-pollination within and across genres in the late Ottoman period.[9]

Deeper inquiry into intimate biofiction by late Ottoman writers on their enslaved mothers further indicates a path to undoing multiple processes of erasure: the erasure of the mourning of/for the mother in the contemporaneous birth of psychoanalysis; the erasure of the formerly enslaved mother in Islamic heritage; and the erasure of the mother in the critical narrative of fatherless Tanzimat writers.[10] Hamid's elegy compensates for the erasure of the mother by lending her a warrior mother of her own. He counters her illiteracy with her erudition in oral literature, and covers for her lack of "dynastic" roots by conferring on her a cosmic nobility of the soul (Kaplan 1967).

[8] When late Ottoman writers debated which Western literary movements should be translated into Ottoman Turkish, they bypassed the Enlightenment. The lacuna is still not addressed; for an example, see Paker (2012, 344). For lists of translations, see Anamur (2013) and Bay (2013).

[9] Marital bonds (rather than blood ties) and characters outside maternal supervision are fundamental to the birth of the novel (Perry 2004; Tóibín 2012).

[10] Laurence Rickels (2011 [1988], 338–339) argues that even after Freud's emphasis on the mother–infant relationship, the "maternalization" of the father allowed the mourning for the father to overshadow the mourning for/of the mother. Jale Parla (1990) influentially foregrounds fatherless Tanzimat writers' ambivalence toward the symbolic father in Sultan Abdühamid II. The formerly enslaved mother could be said to have "returned" in Tanzimat literature after having been overwritten in the Quran and disputed in Islamic jurisprudence as legitimate progenitors of sovereigns (Benslama 2009, 73–108; Mirza 2017; Urban 2020).

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Elegy to a formerly enslaved mother

Hamid charts his unique literary path by opting for an erudite poetic form distinct from both his mother's heritage of oral literature and his father's heritage of history writing.[11] By using the artful aruz meter (*Feilâtün [Fâilâtün] Mefâilün Fa'lün*) to create a Gothic narrative, he also accomplishes a transimperial hybridity of genres. When asked why *Vâlidem* was indeed his favorite poem, he attributes it to his use of blank (metered but unrhymed) verse, downplaying its emotional significance (Tarhan 1995, 721). Bridging the late Imperial and early Republican eras, Hamid is perhaps best known for his lifelong obsession with death in exile: of his father in his diplomatic mission in Tehran when he was fourteen years old; of his first wife, at a young age, in Beirut on their way back from his diplomatic post in Mumbai; of his second wife of twenty years (with separations) in England; of his mother in her land of displacement; and of his son in Washington, DC, where he was the Ottoman *chargé d'affaires*. Despite the affluence of his childhood home, the careers of three generations of diplomats from his father to his son were marked by economic hardship. Hamid's diplomatic appointments sent him to a host of European cities, as well as Poti and Mumbai. The poet had an inconsistent relationship with Abdülhamid II, who once prohibited him from writing altogether, but then praised him and commissioned private detective work (Enginün 2021, 36, 165). Hamid's immediate cultural milieu included such celebrated Tanzimat figures as Ahmet Vefik, Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, Ebüzziya Tevfik, Mizancı Murat, Namık Kemal, and Sami Paşazade Sezai. In his letters, Hamid alludes to Ekrem, Kemal, Sezai, and himself as being so close as to form "one body" (Tarhan 1995, 245, 305).

With his numerous and long-term diplomatic appointments, the poet's career seamlessly followed his allegiance to various sultans, the First and Second Constitutional Eras, and the early Republic, with the exception of his brief discharge after a coup within the Committee of Union and Progress in 1912. When power changed hands yet again in the Second Constitutional Era in 1914, he became a member of the senate and then of parliament in 1928 until his death (Enginün 2021, 49). Hamid spent the years spanning imperial collapse and the War of Independence in Europe with his fourth, young wife, Lucienne, who after their divorce married an Italian count with his permission, but then returned to Hamid in İstanbul (Enginün 2021, 111). Lucienne was Belgian, and his previous wife (Nelly) and mistress (Florence) were British. Marriage to (non-Muslim) foreigners – by and large an upper-class privilege – is an important theme in Hamid's plays. Hamid was the first person to be buried in the cemetery in Zincirlikuyu, following a widely attended state funeral (Parlatır 2014, 22).

As in other works in the subgenre, there are various time lapses in Hamid's *Vâlidem* – between the intradiegetic historic time of the mother's enslavement at the age of five years (presumably, in the early 1830s, which corresponds to the first waves of exodus of Circassian refugees),[12] the time of writing at her death (1897/1898), and the time of

[11] Hayrullah Efendi was from a lineage of *ulama* (religious scholars) and authored an eighteen-volume history (Parlatır 2014, 12).

[12] Cross-checking Hamid's letters, two publishers' notes in 1913 (Tarhan 2019, 311, 364), three vague datings in the poem, the six-year span of events in Circassia, biographical information, and plausible maternity dates favors this interpretation.

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publication with a sequel (1913). Since the mid-nineteenth century, every concession that the Ottoman Empire made to Europe to curtail the maritime slave trade encouraged desert traffic in Africa and trade in the Caucasus, where the Russian Empire's prior abolition of the Caucasian slave trade merely served to expand serfdom (Kurtynova-D'Herlugnan 2010). According to Ehud Toledano (1998, 84), up to one million refugees may have entered the Ottoman Empire between 1855 and 1866, of whom more than 150,000 had slave status in their home country. Before the intensification of especially British political pressure on the Ottoman Empire for abolition, which culminated in the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference in 1889–1890, the exodus of refugees from the war-torn Caucasus was exacerbated by Russian genocidal policies, bringing slavery to a peak in 1881 (Erdem 1996, 132, 58; Richmond 2013). Since the Ottoman court was enmeshed in slavery, state officials demurred before recognizing widespread domestic slavery as such. The endemic "İstanbul dream" of social mobility through enslavement was fueled by famine, war, and genocide (Zilfi 2010, 127–128). The life of Hamid's mother would appear to fit this fantasy narrative.

The former slave's crypt, the son's phantom: Gothic melancholy and exile

Ottoman writers whose mothers were former slaves are not indifferent to the literary genre of the Gothic, which accommodates the character of the itinerant, enslaved girl of the mythologized Caucasus. The trope readily lends itself to the formerly enslaved mother's life narrative. Sezai's *Sergüzeşt* is riddled with howling winds, screeching owls, persistent rain, castle-like mansions, and palaces. Ahmet Midhat translated Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and wrote adaptations of Gothic works. As for Hamid, a late nineteenth-century Ottoman Romantic, the mother's enslavement fuses an epic plot with Romantic and Gothic elements, chief among them the Gothic child. Starting with his first book of poetry, *Sahra* (1879), Hamid extols the lived experience of nature in Bedouin life in alternating contrast with urban decadence. In *Divaneliklerim Yahut Belde* (1885), scenes of Paris merge with fleeting figures of Parisian women, while in *Bunlar Odur* (1886), India offers an expansion of nature's possibilities. The poet meditates on death, loss, and haunting in his most famous poem, *Makber* (1885), as well as in *Ölü* (1885) and *Hacle* (1886).

The equivocal relationship of European Romanticism and the Gothic incorporates a critical history that posited first their contrast, then their identity, perhaps reaching a consensus in their overlaps. Although Romanticism constructed its own ideology in rejecting the Gothic as juvenile and sensationalist, most Romantic writers also produced distinctly Gothic literature, including, of course, Hamid's favorite poet, Byron, in *The Giaour: a Fragment of a Turkish Tale* (Gamer 2002, 98). Second-generation Romantic writers established the tropes of the double and the uncanny though Gothic literature while experimenting with time, complex narrative frames, and possibilities of selfhood (McEvoy 2007, 21). The figure of the Gothic child deepens this literary co-dependency by representing the revolutionary break of the colony with the Empire and embodying the new, orphaned state in the figure of the exilic child (Georgieva 2013, 143–144). She is an overseas explorer primed for sublime settings and displaying perspicacity, educability, and a talent for teaching (Georgieva 2013, 147, 191, 148).

In Hamid's *Vâlidem*, the "orphaned" (*yetim, kimsesiz*) female "prodigy" (*dahiye*) by the name of Münteha (the ultimate; the endpoint) merges with the pastoral fecundity

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and sublime austerity of Circassia. The boundless mountain ranges form the backdrop for drama, a natural castle from which the damsel in distress will be abducted.[13] In its multiple iterations, Münteha, the mother's name, can be recognized as the all-important naming of the Gothic child while her own mother, a Circassian warrior bride who could be mistaken for a young man, exemplifies Gothic children's "fused gender" (Georgieva 2013, 33, 85–86). Hamid's mother herself is the melancholic prodigy – a Romantic trope that glorifies the melancholic disposition as part and parcel of genius (Radden 2009, 157).

The poem opens with the ominous beauty and sublimity of the Caucasus and indulges in the bucolic serenity of Hamid's grandparents' union. Veering into a relativistic apologia for the local slave trade, it crescendos up until the mother's abduction, Black Sea passage, and sale, then sinks into her melancholic occupancy of urban space in İstanbul. Her death, an "ending without closure," is supplemented with a sequel that resurrects her as an allegorical birth-giver of the new empire. The prelapsarian sections on Circassia exercise the poet's fluency in Romantic imagery while prefiguring Gothic melancholy, as a future anterior of enslavement hovers over all kinds of pastoral exuberance. The poem's imagery seeks to invert the Islamicate hierarchy of settlement over nomadism and evokes Turkic mythology. Even at first poetic sight, the village is riddled with paradoxes, "adorned with delightful huts/ . . . distant from one another, solitary." Its daytime mirth is bracketed by tomb-like nights and the nightmarish howls of the Black Sea (Tarhan 2019, 311). From then on, pastoral beauty cedes to the interplay and scathing volatility of the infinite and dynamic sublime: resounding thunder, blinding lightning, howling winds, dangerous wild animals, snowstorms, avalanches, countless stars, and cascades of flowers all boggle the mind (Tarhan 2019, 311–317). The mountains, "the magnificent cemetery of ages," lift the prodigy up and offer her to the angels "who they say are her dynasty," all under the gaze of the stars, "the loving mothers of orphans" (Tarhan 2019, 313). Art is no competition for this overwhelming divine beauty:

> the trees' dance, the springs' song
> the morning smile, the evening tears
> from one pours light into the horizon
> from the other pours dew onto the ground
> ever the harmony of the Almighty's art
> the highest poetry of nature. (Tarhan 2019, 319)

The moment of reprieve in the ethereal, peaceful tune of the shepherd's pipe is counterpoint to the full armor of the shepherdess, which forebodes conflict. The poet thus reincarnates the matrimony that merges the mother, the motherland, and mother nature who will all have lost her (Tarhan 2019, 321).

Themes and imagery of the crypt and the phantom lace the poem from start to finish. In fact, the formerly enslaved mother, an "undead" mother both in life and in death, gains a half-life through the son, who owes not only his existence but also his poetry to her truncated otherworldly past life buried alive in the psychic and imperial topography. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1994) introduce the concept of "the

[13] Such backdrops can include castles, forests, ruins, churches, etc. (Georgieva 2013, 200).

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crypt" to signify the hidden source and dynamics of melancholic disorders that appear undecipherable in classic psychoanalysis and literary interpretation alike. The melancholic crypt denies both the loss and the love of the object, and thus the need to mourn, with the object so thoroughly repressed as to appear "buried alive" under a "double lock" (Abraham and Torok 1994, 154–155). Instead of mourning the object, the melancholic subject fantasizes that the lost object mourns *her*. The "I" speaks in the place of the lost object, which therefore resists transference to the analyst (Abraham and Torok 1994, 143). The crypt blocks the topography of the unconscious like a gaping wound that translates itself into linguistic gaps, a multilingual code in the subject's languages, or an elaborately cryptic narrative, all of which entomb and encrypt her secret.

Hamid's imagery of the exuberant fecundity of the Caucasus entombed alive under the mountains – sepulchers lurking behind daytime clatter – resonates with the inexpressible mystery of the crypt, the non-place of the lost mother/land that the mother imagines as having lost her. Before channeling the mother's exilic melancholy, Hamid foreshadows it: "hidden all around, desolate, silent/appears a melancholic graveyard" (*sû-be-sû hâb, kimsesiz, sessiz/görülür bir hazîn mezaristan*) (Tarhan 2019, 311). Literally with no body, no sound, "spirits talk with fairies" – among them "the shadow of the mother, the greatest beloved" (Tarhan 2019, 312–313). The "sepulcher" is also multilingually encrypted, maximizing the trilingual amalgamation of Ottoman Turkish and the paradoxes of the mother's relationship to language: illiterate, estranged to her mother tongue, mostly silent, melancholic in her use of expletives and sighs, but masterful in her memory of oral literature and the Quran. In the very beginning, comparing the natural splendor of the huts to mansions (*kusur*), the speaker makes a pun on *ümmiye* (illiteracy, lack of education), the word itself coming from the Arabic root for mother (akin to newborn). The line momentarily evokes "the mother's flaw" (*kusur-ı mâder*) before its completion: "Newborn mansions created/by nature's unschooled hand" (*Yed-i ümmiye-i tabiat ile/ hâsıl olmuş kusur-ı mâder-zâd*) (Tarhan 2019, 311). The mother is educated by the various "books" and "texts" of the elements, and then raised in the mansion, but " – To me/she was herself her own tutor" (– *Bence/kendi kendidir mürebiyyesi*) (Tarhan 2019, 316, 334). Her Enlightenment without tutelage means that she needs neither the people's voices nor city lights to be "awakened;" "the illiterate [woman] knew many sciences by heart" (Tarhan 2019, 319, 330). Hamid's extolment of her natural learning belies his support for the education and employment of women.

That Münteha "becomes" the lost love object who misses her is palpable in the memorialization of her two-month passage through the Black Sea: "alone, this motherless girl/tended, all motherly,/to the ailing: the sea-sick/who sought in her a cure" (*Mâderi olmayan bu bîkes kız/Bîkesâne bakardı mâderce/Hastalar ki deniz tutanlardır/ ondan eylerdiler ümid-i şifa*) (Tarhan 2019, 327). The melancholy disposition that will mark her for the rest of her life is cemented as she stares into the distance, the sea and horizon embodying the enormity of her loss (Tarhan 2019, 326). Throughout the poem, the mother is mostly silent about what she remembers, speaking of "spirits" long gone. However, the omniscient narrator fictionalizes the events in the village after her disappearance, thereby fleshing out the void in her life of what *must have happened* after she was abducted – a "missing episode" (Georgieva 2013, 165). After the raiders descend from the mountains and whisk her away right by her family cottage,

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her wounded dog dies slowly, while her young parents, realizing her disappearance, search frantically (Tarhan 2019, 324–325). The speaker thus slips from the auto/biographical account into fiction, imagining details the abducted girl could not possibly have witnessed and would never discover. The undead motherland is thus encrypted as having imploded in its loss and entombed alive inside her.

The mother becomes a phantom, not only for her son, but also, differently, for her daughter – melancholic writers in turn who ventriloquize her otherworldly voice. Hamid's sequel to his own elegy puts his poetry to work in building his own crypt of his undead mother, now memorialized in an allegory for imperial rebirth. In the figure of the phantom, Abraham and Torok (1994) find yet another foreign object outside of the subject's libidinal economy and obstructing the ego. Here the subject inherits and channels another person's trauma and symptoms. When the subject senses the gap in her speech, that it is "disconnected from its libidinal grounding" like that of a ventriloquist, the phantom is summoned and appears "like a stranger" inside her mental topography. It is exorcised only when its identity with the subject is broken and they become recognized in their heterogeneity. In fact, Freud came close to categorizing this phenomenon in 1913 in a case alongside the Wolf Man's ongoing analysis (Abraham and Torok 1994, 179). Surely, both the publication of Hamid's poems and Freud's insight find a cultural context in Spiritism, which was becoming marginalized in Europe but was spreading into the Empire in the 1910s (Türesay 2018, 174).

Channeling the mother in her persistent figuration as the phantom and pointing to her encryption of her lost motherland – as the land that lost her and was buried – Hamid lays bare poetry's possibilities of mediating intergenerational trauma. The closing four pages of the preliminary elegy sinks into the mother's and then his own late-life melancholy. Reciting poetry and the Quran, and mourning her husband, his mother refuses eye surgery: "To see what?" (Tarhan 2019, 331). If it is to see her children, it suffices for her to hear them: "You: live long, go and see this world/I will laugh, as if I had seen it myself" – a phantom, a stranger in the son's mental topography. The speaker interjects, however, that while she says "I will laugh," she is weeping inside. Tired of living and feeling "perhaps three hundred years old," she devotes herself to peaceful prayer. Just as the mother claims to feel vicarious happiness through her children, she pretends to love people back when she perhaps does not: "She too loved everyone or/made everyone think so/Not one person did she hurt" (Tarhan 2019, 334). Some "fifty years after the boat," she watches the sea: "for we have changed/she said, yet this sea remains unchanged," perhaps for having transported her to slavery and confined her in exile (Tarhan 2019, 332). She relishes recalling the past and reflecting on it, but when questioned about it, only deflects. Her visions are but "Spirits!" from the lands where she mentally flees, making her join their ranks.

Despite a primary identification with the maternal phantom's encrypted loss, the speaker's point of view is fluid and dissociative, shifting between that of the victim, the perpetrator, and the witness, identifying seamlessly with each, much like the point of view of a child who witnessed the effects of the mother's violent dislocation (Schwab 2010, 153). In between – perhaps in the tombs of his own re-encryption – Hamid negotiates the paternal, historical narrative that will engulf the maternal, inaccessible past: "One's origin is a vast past/the other's origin is a great forgetting!" (*Birinin aslı bir geniş mâzi/birinin aslı bir büyük nisyân!*) (Tarhan 2019, 329). The paternal discourse – the symbolic order that the Gothic narrative persistently transgresses –

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rushes to fill in and legitimize the "black" hole of the imperial slave trade with the Caucasus, the crypt in the prelapsarian topography that had lost its empire.

The paternal narrative: giving a Black face to the Caucasian–Ottoman slave trade

According to Christina Wieland (2000), even feminist psychoanalytic theory proves limited in imagining possible "solutions" to the necessary separation from the mother. In patriarchy's strictly segregated domestic and cultural spheres (predicated on childcare by mother figures), separation becomes psychologically violent, irrevocably tying the child to the mother – manically for the son and depressively for the daughter. While the vestiges of the good mother as the Madonna became relegated to the imagery of mother nature in Romanticism, the undead mother now comes back to haunt in the shape of vampires, zombies, etc. Hamid's poem tells of his mother's stonewalled separation, one issuing from her own eviscerating trauma. And yet Hamid persists in framing this trauma as historically contingent, relative, and ultimately not-self. The political underpinnings of the mother's enslavement emerge both in imagery and in polemics, yet again displaying the double tribunal that anti-slavery Tanzimat writers must answer to. Just like Sami Paşazade Sezai's iconic anti-slavery novel *Sergüzeşt*, Hamid's poem takes on the work of condemning slavery on the mother's behalf, while minimizing it in diplomatic defense of the fatherland. Such apologia, then, is both political and cultural. "Circassia, where divine beauty/ descended in time immemorial" is compared to *Paradise Lost* with its portended fall into darkness, dictated by Milton at the time of his progressive blindness:

> What might be the book of all those birds?
> Do they not sing to the tune of light and darkness?
> Ah, in this, darkness, too, is a thing.
> That, too, is a color among mysteries.
> That darkness is Milton's paradise. (Tarhan 2019, 315–316)

Hamid's intertextuality takes on multiple functions here: it allows him to plant the motif of the typology of "the Circassian" as a born poet ("those born blind can also be poets/ . . . – How could the Circassian not be a poet?"), to establish a parity between Circassian and British literature, and to "elevate" oral literature to the dignity of high literature through his own ornate poetry. Even more curiously, a subtext of blackness begins to weave together Hamid's comparison of imperialist exploitation and slavery, culminating in his metaphors of the night as racially Black and the ghosts of the night as Ethiopian. This slippage from color to "color" occurs when the Circassian raiders descend to abduct Münteha: "The negro night comes to an end,/Ethiopian ghosts appear – (*Leyl-i zenciye müntehi olacak,/Habeşî birtakım hayaletler* –)."[14] This racial reconfiguration of the calamitous night then dissolves into more neutral words for Black: "this orphan among the migrant raiders/abducting her to the waves, all black (*siyah*)/where she is from, her path, black/this orphan, white and red and black"

[14] I spell out the word so as to avoid confusion about the poet's strikingly racializing word choice, "*zenci*," to describe the black night, as opposed to the more neutral Arabic and Persian words for black he then uses, or the Turkish words "*kara*, *kapkara*," etc.

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(Tarhan 2019, 325). Yet another stanza repeatedly merges mother (*mâder*) and the Black Sea (*Bahr-ı esved*), like a refrain (Tarhan 2019, 327–328).

Hamid's attribution of African blackness to Circassian raiders while generally extolling Circassian lands and people indicates polemical strategies of displacement and containment to reframe Ottoman expansionism in Africa and India.[15] Slavery must be not-self, a kernel of evil migrating from other times and places, from other races. Whereas in this poem the speaker metaphorically racially displaces the Circassian slave trade as Black, Hamid's letters and memoirs more literally assign lesser value to darkness, especially of the skin, dehumanizing color and condemning miscegenation (Tarhan 1995, 145, 740, 317, 304; Tarhan 2013, 246, 161). Racial distinctions matter to him even under the umbrella of Islam: "Praise be to God, though I am a believer, I am not from among the people of Indian Muslims" (Tarhan 2013, 166). They also bleed into the domestic sphere, as when Hamid recounts his brother's memory of how a Black slave, falsely accused of a theft committed by their relative, was sold. This person later became a courtly slave and even helped Hamid's family. Hamid writes of "a heart of diamond in the eyes of this being of ebony" (Tarhan 2013, 133), recirculating a European colonial term that "identified slaves with one of the most prized colonial trade goods" (Dobie 2010, 64). His words echo his letter on the occasion of the publication of Sami Paşazade's *Sergüzeşt* (1888). Bypassing their common ground of maternal slavery, Hamid writes that "this desperate black creature [a character in Sezai's novel] changed my habits, ways, and resolve" and in fact wrenched a tear by dying (Tarhan 1995, 454–455). This curious imagery of reading sentimental literature, replete with the narratorial sacrifice of the Black slave, consolidates the poet's sovereign status as member of a slave-owning family, reader, and writer.

Hamid's racism is not only colorist but also generally ethnic, as exemplified by his essentialist and totalistic condemnation of Armenians in remarks both banal and profoundly political (Tarhan 1995, 413, 553, 560–561; Tarhan 2013, 105, 147, 180, 289, 358). *Qua* national genius, Hamid was a voluntary participant in a published phrenological study in 1932 which showcased him as an individual of superior race and turbulent temperament (Dündar 2010, 446–447). Moreover, a casual attitude toward domestic slavery is apparent in his letters and memoirs as well as recounted in Lucienne's memoirs (Safi 2006, 101–102; Tarhan 1995, 85; Tarhan 2013, 60).[16] His emotional attachments can override, but not undo, his paternalization of (former) slaves: He remembers that as a child in Paris, he misses his nanny and aunt more than he misses his parents and grandmother (Tarhan 2013, 34), and he later confesses to Lucienne: "I was infernally jealous that the cariyes might replace my mother, and I would go about pestering them like a loafer" (Safi 2006, 73).

In his elegy to his mother, too, Hamid minimizes, displaces, and relativizes the Ottoman slave trade, focusing on the Caucasian supply rather than the Ottoman market's demand and dismal conditions. Moreover, Circassian practices of slavery are cast simply as inter-clan feuds, unlike their systematic Western counterparts. In a series of rhetorical questions echoing "How could the Circassian not be a poet?" the speaker asks why the Circassian should not be "a hunter," "a butcher," or in fact, "a

[15] On the Ottoman scramble for Africa, see Minawi (2016). On Hamid's fantasy of annexing India through the caliphate, as well as his racism in India, see Camoglu (2018).

[16] Translations from Lucienne Tarhan's memoirs in Turkish and letters in French are also mine.

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thief" (Tarhan 2019, 317). If "civilized" societies butcher one another with weapons as common as "cutlery," leveling the land with "battleships" and "canons" in the midst of "Europe," "one state usurping another," then:

> Oh why should the Circassian not be a thief?
> Let's say I've abducted his daughter
> from this other clan
> to sell her as a "slave"
> why should he not sell my granny
> also, only for a living?
> Slave trade is no more.
> Ah, now they are all slaves! (Tarhan 2019, 317–318)

Hamid's expletive, "Ah!" which in Turkish expresses deep physical or emotional pain, surely adds melodrama to his statement. Scholars, however, still debate just the same hypothesis. Where Walter Richmond (2013) argues that the notorious Circassian "slave" culture pales before the mass-scale exploitation by the Russian serf system, Liubov Kurtynova-D'Herlugnan (2010) makes a case for enlightened Russian abolitionists who blamed the Circassian slave trade on the Ottoman market. The latter concedes in closing that the Russian abolitionists' case underwrote the expansion, in the same region, of Russian serfdom instead. In Hamid's hyperbole, it is after this "abolition" that Circassians were "all" reduced to the status of "slaves." The speaker asserts that while abolitionism is successfully instrumentalized in colonialism, the European alliance partitioning the Empire is artificial and doomed (Tarhan 2019, 337). It is before this historical European tribunal that Hamid reckons with Ottoman slavery. Meanwhile, he is rewarded with a hefty commission by the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) government for the distribution of his work, *Yadigâr-i Harb*, to the army (Tarhan 2013, 347).

Despite the fact that Hamid fumes against (British) imperialism, he safeguards both his Ottoman allegiance and his profound admiration for the British even at his post in Belgium (Tarhan 2013, 188, 218, 404). As emissary, Hamid considers himself the embodiment of the state, seeking an opulent lifestyle to avoid "shame and embarrassment" (*rezil olmak*) (Tarhan 1995, 300, 338, 633, 636). From the micro level of a crown prince's gracious gesture to his person to the macro level of media coverage, political campaigns, and parliamentary debates, he chronicles and translates every symbolic act or representation, sending priority material by telegram and the rest over weekly reports (Tarhan 1995, 499, 491–496, 573–576; Tarhan 2013, 338, 207). The British colonization of Egypt, his paternal homeland, ranks high on his agenda (Tarhan 1995, 446, 635–636, 669; Tarhan 2013, 416, 254–255). Exposing British and European hypocrisy in perpetuating Ottoman–Armenian conflict and separatism is also a priority (Tarhan 1995, 446, 491–492, 561; Tarhan 2013, 222, 326–327). He frequently requests effective lobbying and undertakes the additional assignment of monitoring the activities of the Armenian committee in Manchester (Tarhan 1995, 572, 669, 592). Hamid's deep-seated ambivalence towards the British is part and parcel of his quest of British women, whom he then subjects to his political ire (Tarhan 2013, 190).

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Abolition is conspicuously absent on Hamid's overt diplomatic agenda, which may be because he gets behind neither Ottoman deflection nor European colonialist abolitionism. By 1913, slavery, an issue of "eighty years ago," appears to have run its course, though he does notice a new French translation of Sezai's *Sergüzeşt* (Tarhan 1995, 743). Sezai's nephew Hamdullah Suphi, too, translated his own poem about his mother's slavery, *Annemin Derdi* ("My Mother's Trouble"), into French. In the light of these writers' attention to Ottoman and European readership, Hamid's polemics in *Vâlidem* can be considered his definitive global political testimony on the lesser evils of the Ottoman–Caucasian slave trade.

Resurrecting the mother: authorial debt and the birth of the new fatherland

It is to this same slave trade that Hamid owes his existence, as he declares in the most rhetorically artful section of the poem: a single sentence of nineteen lines in the subjunctive mood – a melancholic crypt preserving its own *raison d'être*. If the entire chain of events *had not taken place*, had the mother not been snatched from a riverside and "promoted" by the Circassian "sultan" to a lavish mansion; had he not reigned and his people not traded in slaves, and all the girls there not been potential slaves; had the subsequent meeting of his parents not taken place, Hamid "would not have come to be in my appropriate place" (*ben de olmazdım olmaya cesbân* [sic]) (Tarhan 2019, 328–329). The word *çesbân/çespân*, meaning "appropriate, worthy, in the right place," itself marks an entire attitude toward existence: the appropriate circumstances would not have come together; he would not have been in his right place on this earth, nor worthy of existence. Mirroring the speaker's own ambivalence toward his birth, the events of the mother's enslavement and upward mobility are called both "mistakes" and "pleasant happenstances." Aptly, the entire section opens by multifocalizing the mourning for the mother in the image of the sea – the medium of her exile:

> Appearing close to us still, for a moment ours,
> then from us all apart,
> a mournful sea of longing ... (Tarhan 2019, 328)

After her death, the speaker imagines the mother with the spirits of the afterlife – perhaps a final exilic location – where she has really always belonged. For the speaker, "we" mortals, gradually deprived of all signs of life, are but visitors in our own frame (Tarhan 2019, 333). The absent mother draws him into the dream world, affectionate and talkative. But "when awake reality is not so/when awake death becomes reality." The motherland, always elsewhere, permeates all spaces.

The poem's sequel is testimony to how Hamid, the speaker, is unable to let the mother pass on. She is made to live on, undead, but as Rickels (2011 [1988], 339) reminds us, "the father covers the past by becoming, in the guise of mother or sibling, the child's premier repast." Hamid's sequel will encrypt the narrative of the mother's slavery yet again, within the vision of a new, unified nation of the Young Turks – a future fatherland issuing from the now legitimized, formerly enslaved, mother. The poem thus forecloses the avenues of mourning it appears to open, "the telepathic lines to her unmourned dead which the mother lays down in the living child"

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(Rickels 2011 [1988], 339). For his part, the poet dictates hope where he finds none, prescribing national rebirth by repurposing the undead mother, a vehicular phantom in the shape of the motherland: "Long live the motherland/that today makes us live on!" (Tarhan 2019, 335). This replacement mother, seeming to help him move on, in fact encrypts Hamid's own childhood experience: "Your mother is now invisible, but/ you again have a mother, ô Hamid! . . . You too have lived thanks to her" (Tarhan 2019, 334–335). The nation having united and persevered through war, "our mother/will surely give us new life" (Tarhan 2019, 337). Once again, the mother transubstantiates a primal land into a new fatherland guarded by a new band of brothers: "everyday born from her are/many thousands of fathers (*vâlid*) and sons!" Thus, true to the absence of clear endings and closure in the Gothic, Hamid delivers her in a fertile phantom's heroic return, pregnant with the future male nation.

The nanny according to Mihrünnisa, the aunt-in-law, the dead wife, the teenage bride

What *Vâlidem* enacts is a metonymic chain of replacements: the auto/biographical mother is allegorized as the motherland whence she was exiled, itself to be replaced by the fatherland in short order. The chain extends from the now motherless mother to the nanny: the family slave who remained one. Hamid allows the narrative of the mother's upward mobility, which İnci Enginün (2021, 213) compares to a "fairy tale," to overwrite the much less glorious story of his nanny, whom his sister Mihrünnisa Hanım does not neglect to poeticize. Mihrünnisa Hanım, a poet who published some scores of poems and was well respected by contemporary fellow poets, is called "a sensitive soul" in Hamid's poem (Tarhan 2019, 318). In his memoirs, Hamid recalls the nanny, Mânende Kalfa, and her folk songs that "perhaps" bemoan the husband she left behind; she "preserved her fondness" for Hamid and stayed to raise his son (Tarhan 2013, 35). Ever the seeker of crypts, Hamid writes, "A corner of these memoirs of mine is an epitaph for her."

As for Mihrünnisa Hanım, she cannot but fantasize that the paternal hearth is a refuge for these (formerly) enslaved women including their nanny, herself an intimate replacement for the distant mother. Her poem *Bir Hatıra* ("A Memory") channels the nanny's lullabies telling of her long-lost motherland: "She would cry, I know not why, but/she would describe Caucasia to me from time to time." The speaker's heartache is unmitigated by time, and the memory still gives her grief (Gürbüz 2020, 93, 94). Just like the mother whom Hamid calls "the greatest beloved," Mihrünnisa calls her nanny's (and her mother's) motherland her "beloved." Again, like the mother in Hamid's telling, the nanny wishes the children joy where she feels none, bidding Mihrünnisa to "go play," but so sadly that the child, in seamless identification with her, must stay to make her smile. Growing up, she "would come to understand" that the nanny is exiled from her homeland, just like her mother. These bygone events have "happened, yes, all of it like a dream, happened/But so unlike a dream is this outcry" (Gürbüz 2020, 94). Having transitioned to the mother's shared fate and her cold respect for the nanny, Mihrünnisa maintains that "[Mânende Kalfa] was fonder of [F]ather than of her own father" and grateful to his master's children. Once the speaker transitions from the nanny to the mother, however, the hidden pronouns "*o*" (she, he, it) merge into one, as if this prioritization of the father and his

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children could be either the nanny's or the mother's – or both. In her own short poem, *Vâlidem* and two others simply entitled *Bir Neşide* ("A Verse"), Mihrünnisa conjures the mother like an apparition from the motherland, extolling her beauty, mournfulness, and poetic disposition. Her mother seems to be calling out to her, lurking in the shadows, alive in all her youth, "both appearing and non-existent:/her god-given state" (Gürbüz 2020, 94, 97, 98). The mother always hails from the elsewhere of her exilic distance: the motherland of her memories, the afterlife of her death, the dreamworld of her children.

The metonymic chain of replacements does not end here. While the mother's natural companion could have been the nanny, she prefers another, one she befriended on the slaver boat. Like Münteha, this girl married into a wealthy mansion, but their paths crossed again only when their children got married. This "crafted sisterhood" (*yapma kardeşlik*) is "more agreeable than a real one," since it is not inherited but "by choice" (*ihtiyari*) (Tarhan 2019, 330). The two slave-turned-mistresses are "angels" brought closer together by mourning and apoplexy in old age. In a cruel metaphor, the speaker calls them "bed slaves/– it is said their state of slavery did not end –" (Tarhan 2019, 330). Nevertheless, the two women remain equals in the upward plot twists of their life, unlike the nanny. The social hierarchy between slave and former slave remains just as unassimilable as their common past of enslavement.

Yet another replacement figure is Hamid's first wife, both the mother and the wife growing up as "orphans" who were "pitied" by the poet (Enginün 2021, 213, 153). Surely, the mother was not an "orphan" but abducted into slavery. The circumstances of the Caucasian slave trade may resemble orphanhood, destitution, bare subsistence, refugee status, or traffic in women, but the trauma and even stigma of abduction or sale into slavery proves unassimilable. In her melancholy the invalid wife, too, becomes Hamid's "mother," with "mother's milk – a black poison" (Tarhan 2019, 179, 144). Such replacements recall the entangled and quasi-incestuous identifications within the Gothic family. The poet, who spent countless days at his wife's grave, writes that he would rather die with her, but "woe is me . . . my mother remains in the world" (Tarhan 2019, 120). Perhaps, as befits a phantom, *she* is imagined as mourning him, as *he* can never really mourn (Rickels 2011 [1988], 16).

Late in life, Hamid married Lucienne, some forty years his junior and still a teenager. She was influential in persuading Hamid to revise previously unpublished material, among them *Vâlidem*, published soon after their marriage (Dündar 2010, 33). "Pathological" but also "like a fairy tale" according to Enginün (2021, 141, 143), this fabled relationship extends the interminable metonymic chain of melancholic replacement. Hamid himself fears that she sacrificed both her prospective motherhood and her brilliance by leaving school and her motherland, Belgium, to marry him at his old age (Tarhan 2013, 345–346). For her part, Lucienne consistently evokes servility in self-deprecation: "Whatever happens, I will always be your friend, your servant. Starting today I am ready to do whatever you order me to do" (Haamit 1932, 60–61).[17] Leaving Europe before returning to Hamid and to İstanbul for good, she

[17] "Votre amie votre créature" (sic) connotes, in context, "your friend/lover" and "your fantasy woman/loose woman/servile subordinate."

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wonders how long she will have "this scuttling gait of a slave manumitted too late in life" – much like his nanny (Haamit 1932, 192).

Coda

When the foreign, formerly enslaved mother resurfaces in late Ottoman literature, it is with the vehemence of a phantom haunting her progeny. Her melancholic crypt of the mother/land that "lost her" is reimagined by her son who, torn between allegiance to the fatherland and obsession with the motherland, strives to contain his mourning for/of the mother. In this article I have aspired to show, through Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan's poem *Vâlidem*, his sister's ambivalent and variegated portrayal of both their mother and their nanny, and a host of family figures, the intergenerational resonance of the mother's crypt and her phantom presence within the imperial edifice. In the spirit of the Gothic child and the rhythm of aruz meter, the mother – orphaned, exiled, and enslaved – not only returns to haunt but is in fact conjured by her children in a metonymic chain of replacement mothers.

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