

**THE CAR AS A THING: LATİFE TEKİN'S *SWORDS OF ICE* AND  
JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S "EMBARGO"**

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**Abstract**

From a transnational and trans-historical perspective, this paper lays stress upon the car as a technological material and its fictional representations in Latife Tekin's *Swords of Ice* (1989) and José Saramago's "Embargo" (1978). Readers from different cultures have been attracted to car narratives because they are "thing-driven" – based on cars – as a representative of the matter which can speak for themselves, as it were. This study claims that the significance of the car in Tekin's *Swords of Ice* and Saramago's "Embargo" can be explained through the theoretical lens provided by the new materialisms. In order to explore ideas on the subject-object interactions and elucidate the independent and autonomous life of things, this article will first briefly refer to the theories of new materialisms, and then read works of fiction by Latife Tekin, and José Saramago concentrating on the agency and power of the car as a quasi-object in both texts.

**Keywords:** Latife Tekin, José Saramago, new materialisms, car narratives, quasi-objects

**BİR EŞYA OLARAK ARABA: LATİFE TEKİN'İN *BUZDAN KILIÇLAR* VE  
JOSÉ SARAMAGO'NUN "EMBARGO" ESERLERİ**

**Öz**

Ulus-aşırı ve tarih-ötesi açılardan bakarak, bu çalışma teknolojik bir madde olarak arabaya ve onun Latife Tekin'in *Buzdan Kılıçlar* (1989) ve José Saramago'nun "Embargo" (1978) adlı eserlerinde roman-düzlemindeki temsiline odaklanmaktadır. Farklı kültürlerden okuyucular araba anlatılarına ilgi duymuşlardır çünkü bu tür anlatıların, adeta kendileri adına konuşabilen eşya/maddenin bir temsilcisi olarak, "şey güdümlü" – arabalara dayalı – oldukları gerekçesiyle başarılı olduklarını düşünüyorum. Bu çalışma, yeni materyalizmlerin (*New Materialisms*) sağladığı teorik merceklerle, Tekin'in *Buzdan Kılıçlar* romanında ve Saramago'nun "Embargo" adlı

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hikayesinde, arabanın öneminin açıklanabileceğini iddia etmektedir. Özne-nesne etkileşimleri hakkında fikirleri araştırmak ve şey/eşyanın bağımsız ve özerk yaşamını açıklamak için, bu makale önce yeni materyalizm kuramlarına kısaca değinecek, daha sonra Latife Tekin ve José Saramago'nun eserlerini, arabaların yarı-nesnel olarak güçlü birer aktör rolü oynamaları bağlamında okuyacaktır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Latife Tekin, José Saramago, yeni materyalizmler, araba anlatıları, yarı-nesnel

### **Introduction**

As a response to the theories of humanities and social sciences that had a tendency to render everything abstract, wrapped in the shadowy parts of hyperreality, or in the infinite world of signifiers, a recent counter approach emerged in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that supported a turn towards or a new focus on things or materiality in order to salvage the real – things – that began to decline in some groups of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century social theory such as postmodernism and poststructuralism. Unlike the previous systems of thought that defined the world linguistically, socially, or culturally by ignoring the materiality whatsoever, scholars of new materialisms, who are from various disciplines and grouped under new materialisms, aim at cherishing the materiality of the world with its nonhuman actors. As Yılmaz claims, “merg[ing] the worlds of animals, plants, human beings and things” (2019) brings different forces of animate and inanimate together creating a nebula of life. Thinkers of the new materialisms theorize matter as “an agentic force that interacts with and changes the other elements in the mix, including the human” (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008, p. 7).

The new materialisms do not only accept the existence and power of things in the external or artistic worlds, but they also bring new definitions and approaches to things. To illustrate, in his article functioning as a manifesto, “Thing Theory” (2001), Bill Brown coined the term by claiming that the thingness of an object is confronted when it loses its function. So a thing is an opaque existence that cannot be reduced to an object. It is almost impossible to talk about things without referring to Brown's frequently quoted explanation: we confront the thingness of a thing “when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily” (Brown, 2001, p. 4). The thing is more and beyond an object because the thing reveals itself and its assertive power when there is an interruption in the conventional understanding of the subject-object relation: there is a binary relation between the human subject and inanimate object in which the former defines the latter by looking at it. When the inanimate object resigns its quality of function for the human

subject, it re-emerges as a thing – an autonomous and powerful inanimate agent. Object-oriented ontology as a new field in philosophy which was introduced by Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux, along with Thing Theory, puts forward that objects have their own independent existence regardless of human perception. Both fields of new materialisms, that is, thing theory and object-oriented ontology share some common grounds such as both reject the anthropocentrism and support a more egalitarian understanding of objects.

In the past, things were instrumentalized, categorized, and positioned as secondary, ossified, and quiet residents of the world. Today, however, there is a new world, in which things and human beings are entangled in diverse assemblages. Conty elucidates this as follows,

Subjects and objects, the infatuation of modernity, have gone out of fashion. Scholars today see agency, events, lines of flight and entanglements where they used to see subjects and objects, often leading to an indiscretion between the two that is celebrated as having finally overcome the anthropocentrism responsible for justifying a human subject over and against a world of things (Conty, 2018, p. 73).

The new materialisms work to demonstrate that the matter effectively influences, shapes, and changes social realities, human lives and cultures. As Ayyıldız puts forward, “culture is the representation of ideologies; therefore, it contains all parts of life” (2020). The new materialisms regard things as actors which are vital and powerful, and it therefore purports that humans should stop diminish their significance by viewing them as mere symbols or tools; on the contrary, new materialisms assume more complex heterogenous web of relations between things and humans. Human beings should thus try to understand the sense of things to recover the uncanny and intricate attachment between things and themselves, and this requires humans to question and deconstruct the approaches that create a divide between humans and things. Likewise, Çetiner argues that “the New Materialisms introduces a new way of thinking about matter beyond cultural and discursive confines” (2020). More recently, Bruno Latour, who claims that we have never been modern, sets out to demonstrate a different interpretation of modernity in the actor-network theory. As Conty underlines, “The actor- network theory recognizes all entities as expressing agency, allowing objects to become integral and active threads of an intersecting scientific, social and discursive world” (Conty, 2018, p. 77). Latour offers overthrowing the current thought of the modern that leans on binary oppositions or dualisms such as “nature and culture, subject and object, social sciences and natural sciences, which create the hideous scenography of mind/world/substance/language” (Latour, 1993, p. 47). As a replacement for this, he suggests

a "return of the repressed" (Latour, 1993, p. 37), that is, a return to things, in the context of new materialisms. According to Latour, "the human, as we now understand, cannot be grasped and saved unless that other part of itself, the share of things, is restored to it" (Latour, 1993, p. 136). Conty states that Latour, like Brown, attracts our attention to this undeniable "relationality and interdependence of all of matter (subject/object, nature/culture, matter/mind, human/nonhuman)" (Conty, 2018, p. 74). To illustrate the entanglement of all matter, it can be stated that human beings can have feelings and thoughts only because of the world of things which function as a powerful force to ignite and reveal those emotions and thoughts. In a relationship which is devoid of any sense of superiority or inferiority, things and humans constitute myriad interdependent webs of meaning-making formulations.

Following in the spirit of literary materialist scholarship which has sought to demonstrate the literary objects in their potentiality to display the social dynamics both within and outside the text, an exploration of things in literary works relies upon object agents as their entrée into the cultural. Literary works can function as platforms for commentary on issues of identity, meaning, structure, social critique, materiality, immateriality. Such explorations of things enable literary critics to approach literature and culture with a fresh perspective to understand the essential questions concerning identity, agency, autonomy, empowerment, and identification, to name a few. As Brown puts "literature can serve as a mode of rehabilitative reification: a re-signifying of the fixations and fixities of *thing-ification* that will grant us access to what remains obscure (or obscured) in the routines through which we (fail to) experience the inanimate object world" (Brown, 2015, p. 222). It is possible to examine works of literature to register the thingness of inanimate objects as autonomous actors or subjects. I will do so by considering two texts chosen according to their attentiveness to the car as a material object or a thing, and Latife Tekin's *Swords of Ice*<sup>2</sup> (1989) and José Saramago's "Embargo" (1978) display their similar approaches to the car: as Gamble et al. argues, they show how the car is "alive, lively, vibrant, dynamic, agentive, and thus active" (Gamble et al., 2019, p. 111). Cars in these texts enter into a mutually-dependent knot with the characters. Texts do this first by problematizing and defamiliarizing the car as an object, and then by accounting for the car's agency or its thingness in a new light that reveals a changed relation between subject and object.

New materialists agree that we need to overcome the modern distinction between the human and the animate/inanimate materials. However, as highlighted by Conty (2018) as

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<sup>2</sup> The excerpts taken from Tekin's novel *Buzdan Kılıçlar* (1989) are translated from Turkish to English (*Swords of Ice*) by Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne in 2007.

well, the idea of return to things to elevate the status of things by attributing the enabling criteria to them, treating things as ends in themselves, anthropomorphising the inanimate materials, potentially has the risk of reinforcing the same modern mistake: separating the human from the other forms of life. Also, if that thing is a technological tool, elevating its status might mean reinforcing commodity fetishism and reification. Therefore, handling the technological tools like a car as an actant requires a careful analysis. A car is one of the best examples of overcoming modern dualities such as differentiation between the human/the nonhuman and subject/object because the car creates a hybrid – an ongoing and transmuting network – consisting of both human and thing actants: the embodiment of reconnection of these binaries. Therefore, I am following Latour in classifying a technological object, the car in Tekin and Saramago's texts as an autonomous actant, but one never acting alone, and can be understood as a source of "techno-human hybrid" (Latour, 1993, p. 130). A techno-human hybrid is not separate from the mediating agency of human beings, or is always entangled with human agency.

#### **The Car as a Quasi-object in *Swords of Ice* and "Embargo": Techno-human hybrid**

Since the first use of the cars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the world history, the writers of fiction, as well as along with the artists of other forms of expression like painting and music, have received the car as an engine that has had the power to transform and change the culture. Modernist writers from all around the world<sup>3</sup> located the car in a wide range of positions in their art: they deemed it as an object of desire for possession, progress, empowerment, and liberation, as well as, a source of threat, entrapment, decline and self-destruction of the owner.<sup>4</sup> In world literature, the car thus has been frequently used as an epitome of the protagonists' psychological statuses in and reactions to the changing modern times. Based on this prevalent tendency of majority of fiction writers in world literature,<sup>5</sup> the car has been attended to as an object that is transparent and has a functional value. In other words, in such texts of the major modernist writers, the representation of the car underscores it as an inherently passive object; a naturalized means of the modern life, a

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<sup>3</sup> Such as K. Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920), E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), N. Hikmet Ran's *835 Satır [835 Lines]* (1929), J. Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), I. Fleming's *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: The Magical Car* (1964), T. Apaydın's *Sarı Traktör [The Yellow Tractor]* (1973), A. Ağaoğlu's *Fikrimin İnce Güllü [The Slender Rose of My Thought]* (1977), S. King's *From a Buick 8* (2002), O. Pamuk's *Masumiyet Müzesi [The Museum of Innocence]* (2008), to name a few.

<sup>4</sup>There is even a term "car narratives" as a subgenre of the Turkish novel introduced by the Turkish Professor of Literature, Jale Parla (2003b). Fatih Aşan (2017). See the References.

<sup>5</sup>See the Footnote 2 (above).

possession, that intensifies the hierarchical distance between the inanimate object and human subject.

Yet, the fictions of Latife Tekin and José Saramago offer a perspective on the car which can be read in the light informed by Bill Brown's Thing Theory: when the car stops being an object and becomes a thing, it starts to manifest its power, vibrancy, and potency in the complex web of relationships in our world; also the hierarchical binary relation between the object and subject gets disrupted, and consequently, a fresh new potential of relations is born out of this, which enhances the idea of the interdependent web of human beings and things eschewed by the theoretical formulations of New Materialisms. Hence, due to their distinctive involvement in and interest to the car as a novelistic material, I will pursue a new materialist approach to Tekin's *Swords of Ice* and Saramago's "Embargo" by analysing the car in both texts as a thing. Though completely and definitely disparate, each of these car narratives are profoundly interested in the active agency of the car, which is ordinarily ignored, and they open themselves for a reading that offers a return to the thing as a way to understand and raise the status of things to problematize and overcome anthropocentrism by challenging the subject-object dichotomy. In these texts, the car as a thing refuses to be objectified by the protagonists, and instead it owns its own agency and pursues its own plan, which thus shapes and encourages certain types of human thinking, feeling, and acting patterns.

Tekin's first novels mainly reflect the desperate lives of the poor, who move to the peripheries of the big city living in poor neighbourhoods or slums. *Swords of Ice* is one of those novels which can be regarded as the manifesto of the poor and their mentality. Yet, *Swords of Ice* stands out among Tekin's first novels because the novel is dominated by a vital and powerful object, the protagonist Halilhan Sunteriler's red Volvo. Tekin's reverence for the world of objects in *Swords of Ice* is so immense that sometimes it seems as if she tries to transform the word into the object itself. Tekin's novel elevates and raises the status of the world of objects, so the reader confronts the process in which an object, his car, transmuting into a thing having an agentive, potent and powerful presence, "a quasi-object" (Tekin, 2007, p. 51) and a human, Halilhan, turning into a "quasi-subject." From a new materialist perspective, the modern distinction between subject which has been conventionally regarded as "human," "the active and/or powerful" and object as "nonhuman," "the passive and/or submissive" is denied. The appearances of hybrid entities take the place of this way of hierarchical understanding, which defies the modern constitution and bring together human and nonhuman elements, subject and object properties, in a unified phenomenon. Thus, new

materialist thinking adopts a more egalitarian and interactive relationship between quasi-object and quasi-subject. In the context of this study, a quasi-object, as in the form of a car, is as active and powerful as the human in the meaning-making processes within the texts; accordingly, as quasi-subjects, humans are depicted as passive and submissive as cars.

Halilhan Sunteriler equates his existence with his possession of a red Volvo which he believes will bring him money, status, power, and eventually a voice. "Halilhan Sunteriler was the first of the area's poor who had been lucky enough to transform his sense of dispossession into the substance of a car" (Tekin, 2007, p. 16). Like the previous anti-heroes of Tekin's novels, Halilhan living on the edge of the big city, in a poor neighbourhood, lacks not only money and status but he is also devoid of a voice; he is one of the invisible or "ragged" men in Tekin's words (2007). He aspires to have a voice or visibility in the world of capitalist system<sup>6</sup>. He is burning with the desire of being somebody in the world of money, so he represents any man who thinks everything and everyone can be dispensable for the sake of attaining money and power.

Feeling at once proud and elated to have taken the ownership of something so precious and packed with memories of a world lying beyond his reach, Halilhan whispered to his friend Gogi: some energy mass has planted in him the belief that the Volvo was destined to put them in touch with those who ran the country's *ekonomi* [translators' choice of word](Tekin, 2007, p. 17).

Halilhan's Volvo is the only powerful centrepiece which ornaments his imagination of a good future and a happy life. For this purpose, he does his best to convince his brothers (Mesut and Hazmi) and best friend (Gogi) to revitalize their bankrupt company called *Teknojen* in order to earn money and belong to the rich group of people in the city.

As Mesut, Hazmi and Gogi set out for home after laying their future on the line, the Volvo, the main character in their discussions about *Teknojen*, was lying low, bereft of all life spirit or breath, where Halilhan, with *milimetrik* accuracy, had parked her. Out of fuel, she was out of the action too (Tekin, 2007, p. 59).

Halilhan deceives and uses Mesut, Hazmi, Gogi, and even his wife in order to belong to the big city, İstanbul. For the sake of this dream-like life, he loses his family's and friend's love and trust. However, especially losing his friend is a big stroke to Halilhan. The narrator's note on this reflects his great disappointment: "In great friendships even a hole as tiny as an atom

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<sup>6</sup> The theme of speechlessness and the quest of finding a speech in Tekin's works have been explored by such Turkish scholars of literature as Jale Parla, Sibel Irzik, and Nurdan Gürbilek. See the References.

could spark off magnetic storms that destroy love and flatten the soul to a silken thinness ... Suddenly he understood everything" (Tekin, 2007, p. 128-9).

The idea of Volvo's function as a means or a décor to help Halilhan to climb the ladder of society has been explored by several scholars of Turkish literature<sup>7</sup>. Unlike, the previous readings of Tekin's novel, this study proposes that her novel depicts the car as an end in itself and problematizes the anthropocentric orientations in the light of ideas borrowed from new materialisms and assumes the car as a quasi-object which is as powerful as the human in the meaning-making processes of the text. First and foremost, Volvo constantly defines and shapes Halilhan's understanding of the world and of his own subjectivity. The novel as the title of it suggests is about a battle fought with "swords of ice" and consequently is bound to be lost. The tragedy of Halilhan as an everyman who wants to belong to and survive in the world of rich people in the city –imagined as the centre of wealth, speech, visibility, happiness – is gradually depicted when both his car and himself are physically and emotionally dissolved at the end of the novel. This theme of decay and critique of capitalism in the novel is contributed not only by the deeds of Halilhan but also the red Volvo.

As a quasi-object the car is depicted to have an autonomous free-will to go to wherever it wants. For instance, Halilhan says to his friend Gogi that "Volvo conquered the remote control of my soul. The steering wheel is out of my control and goes to any direction it wants" (Tekin, 2007, p. 15). The car itself goes to a night club and gives a ride to a woman called Jüli. The car's getting the control is a projection of human behaviour onto a nonhuman technological object. The car has autonomy but to problematize this issue, it seems that the car uses its freedom to realize Halilhan's dreams. It is a mediator which actively contributes to the way in which the end is realized. According to this example, one can state that it is impossible to separate the agency of the technological tool from the mediating power of the human being. As Latour claims "the actions of the car as an actant is always delegated to them by humans" (Latour, 2013, p. 219) because as mentioned before, within the entanglements of the thing and the human being, they are interdependent. The car and the human being in *Swords of Ice* are not separate but always intertwined. In this web of relations, the red Volvo, furthermore, turns out to be "a monster" and somehow it reverses the equation from Halilhan's Volvo into Volvo's Halilhan by "rendering Halilhan mechanized" (Parla, 2003a, p. 158). Thus, if there is no radical or absolute boundary line between things and human beings, the car naturally exemplifies this infusion by performing the role of an actant

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<sup>7</sup> Narlı (2002), Parla (2003b), Uğurlu (2009), and Balık (2011). See the References.

that is created by humans but, at the same time, in return it possesses the power to objectify humans. According to this argument, the boundaries between the thing and the human being gets blurry because both the car and human being as matters are mutually defined and constructed. This idea thoroughly challenges the anthropomorphic perspective that defines human beings as superior or exceptional in nature.

José Saramago's "Embargo" is a short story from his collection of short stories titled *The Lives of Things* (originally *Objecto Quase*, 1978), and it eponymously underscores the reader's attention to the things. Set during the times of the Arab petrol embargo of the 1970s in Portugal, the story depicts an unusual day of an anonymous man's life in his car, his very last day and eventual demise. Although the story is quite short and straightforward, it is so powerful and successful in the sense that it can create the feelings of discomfort, claustrophobia and Kafkaesque delusions.

What makes Saramago's text unique, like Tekin's in the context of Turkish literature, is its attention to the cultural circumstances and particularities in the story, yet the text's attentiveness to the car as a thing establishes its connections with other global literatures that can be subjected to close reading through the theoretical lens offered by new materialisms. While portraying his perspective on the political issues in the 1970s of Portuguese and harshly criticizing the oppressive regime of dictators, Saramago touches upon the longstanding problems of the modern and questions the divide between the thing/the human being, nature/culture and the centre/periphery. The title of the book in Portuguese, *Objecto Quase*, significantly reveals the writer's ideas on interrogating and challenging the human being's self-conception as an exceptional and superior being to the non-human, thus in "Embargo", Saramago offers a narrative arena in which the car as a quasi-object defies and threatens the human being's power and status. His text, in a dystopian atmosphere, invites the reader to mediate on the limits of Anthropocene.

Saramago's explicit concern for the material world and its interference with the human world enables this study to read the car and the human being in "Embargo" in the network that functions as a techno-human hybrid in Latour's term. At the very beginning of it, the reader is introduced with the character in the third person narration: "He awoke with the distinct feeling of having been interrupted in the middle of a dream" (Saramago, 2012, p. 27). As portrayed before, in Tekin's novel, the protagonist only turns into a "machine", as it were, only at the end of the novel, yet Saramago's text goes one step further and does not even assign a name to the subject. Schulze states that "rarely do Saramago's characters have

names" (Saramago, 2012, p. 167). This nameless character wakes up and tries to go to work by his car. Unlike Tekin's protagonist, the man in Saramago's story does not have any special affection for his car. However, the common attitude between the texts of Tekin and Saramago is anthropomorphizing the car. Furthermore, Saramago's text is even zoomorphizing the car. "He switched on the ignition and at the same instant the engine rumbled with a deep, impatient panting [...] The car sped up the street, scraping the asphalt like an animal with its hooves. [...] Like a setter following the scent the car dodged in" (Saramago, 2012, p. 30). The man's unwilling adventure or mishap starts in the morning. The car starts to take the control and travels from one petrol station to another.

Suddenly the car gave a lurch and veered towards the road to the right before coming to a halt in a queue of cars smaller than the first one. What had gone wrong? He had a full tank, well, practically full, damn it. He manipulated the gear lever and tried to reverse, but the gear-box refused to obey him. He tried forcing it, but the gears seemed to be blocked. How ludicrous (Saramago, 2012, p. 29).

At the beginning of the story, the character cannot comprehend what is happening and is still sure of his power and control over the car. "He has always considered himself a better [sic] than average driver. A question of having the right temperament, these quick reflexes which were probably exceptional" (Saramago, 2012, p. 28). When the car stops functioning or functions different from as expected, the thingness of the thing becomes evident; it stops being a see-through object and gets attention. The character finally understands that "he was imprisoned in his car" (Saramago, 2012, p. 31). Now the human being is not so powerful and exceptional compared to the non-human matter, which poses a direct challenge to culture/nature divide. The character imprisoned in his car gets extremely scared even of the idea of humiliation in case journalists show him trapped inside his car and people's judgemental stares. "He, sobbing his heart out and whining like a frightened animal, went on driving the car. Allowing himself to be driven" (Saramago, 2012, p. 34). When the exceptionality and authority of the human being is shaken and destroyed, the thing and the human being come closer and resemble each other. This confrontation with the agency of the thing is not an easy experience for the character: "Overcome with nausea, he could feel a veil being drawn over his eyes three times. Groping, he opened the door to prevent himself from suffocating and, at that moment, either because he was dying or the engine had gone dead, his body slumped to the left and slid out of the car" (Saramago, 2012, p. 44). The death of the man at the end of the novel does not create feelings of defeat or victory for the man and the car respectively. Is it a real death or a death of his ego? It may be the death of the human

being who separates him/herself from nature, considers him/herself as superior to the non-human and blindly obeys the enslavement of oppression. As Baysal argues the human being should be "regarded as a species that interacts with other species in many ways and is influenced by others as well as having an impact on them" (2020). The allegorical death of the man in the story eventually creates a new moment of enlightenment. In the network of techno-human hybrid, the reader witnesses that the hidden world of things – cars here – and the events taking place there has an impact on the known world. The thing in the story is so powerful that it can bring an "end" to the human being and it plays a more and more substantial role in the entangled world of human beings and things.

As another point, Tekin and Saramago's own sensitivity of the car as a representative of technological systems functioning as social mechanisms of exploitation, which is also shared by Latour, reflects their concern with capitalism or their anti-capitalist stances. In order to reverse the effects of capitalism and dictatorial regimes which are born out of the logic of anthropocentrism, Tekin and Saramago use the car to expose the illusory projection of human agency onto things in their texts, which pinpoints that this illusion leads humans to overlook the actual roles and powers of nonhuman actors in constructing actor-networks. From an anti-capitalist perspective, their texts can be read as critiques of capitalism on the ground that they problematize the fact that how humans are turned into slaves by the very products of their own. However, it is also significant to note here that for Tekin and Saramago, the depictions of the car in the texts expresses not only the growing disenchantment with the ways capitalism affects societies but also challenges the ways anthropocentrism defines humans and nonhumans. That is, they question the power dynamics between the object and the subject, and reverse the hierarchical binary system between them. Within this new perspective, the thing becomes an autonomous and powerful inanimate agent asserting that both animate (humans) and inanimate (the car) agents are equally important in an endless world of co-dependence.

### Conclusion

Foregrounding the agency and the intrinsic activity of the thing in their fiction, Tekin and Saramago similarly formulate their critical discourse around the car, which has implications for politics within a frame that encloses a more interdependent stance to the worlds of humans and things. The questions they grapple with mainly concern the issues with respect to materiality. The car enters into an interdependent network with living bodies. The car as represented in their texts refuses easy definitions and categorizations. As Brown asks

“why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies” (Brown, 2003, p.4), the car in Tekin and Saramago’s texts witnesses the changes in the protagonist’s identity throughout the narration, and accordingly transforms its relationship with people. Leaving Halilhan in complete speechlessness or killing the man in “Embargo” at the end can be seen as an attempt of reversing the hierarchical relation between subject and object or an attempt of denying the anthropocentrism because addressing the Anthropocene entails the dissolution of the nature/culture divide.

At the end of the both Tekin and Saramago’s narratives, rather than an autonomous creature somehow standing apart from material conditions and relations, the human being is portrayed as involved in and dependent upon a web of material relations. Widening an understanding of a network which can include both animate and inanimate (also technological) actants means widening the participation of every and each thing in the “democracy of things” as Latour elucidates that the purpose of the social sciences is designating “how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and to maintain its existence” (Latour, 2004, p. 245). This point of view addresses the entanglement of our current interdependent world.

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