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Jamesian Intertexts in Selim İleri's *Bu Yalan Tango*

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Selim İleri, one of the prolific and leading writers of modern Turkish Literature, frequently draws upon literature and the arts in his fiction. Published in 2010, his novel *Bu Yalan Tango* [*This Delusive Tango*] may well be the most intertextually dense novel he has produced to date. Revolving around the story of a ninety-year-old woman novelist whose career spans a long period from the 1930s to the 2000s, the novel alludes to a vast array of Turkish and non-Turkish literary figures. One such figure is Henry James, the Master, who is obliquely yet effectually inscribed into the novel's narrative scheme and conceptual groundwork. As regards point of view, the text bears traces of James the experimental fictionalist in its selective narratorial focus on character and interiority. With respect to thematics, the narrative engages James the man in its attempt to combine its feminist agenda with its queer critique. İleri carries the issue of gender and sexuality further onto a social and political plane, again in sustained conversation with the figure of the Master. In the final part of the novel, the Master is invoked through several intertexts. Besides serving to combine the novel's feminist and queer agendas, these intertexts enable İleri to address his broader concerns about how contemporary Turkish writers have to negotiate a treacherous terrain that enmeshes the personal and the political. This article argues that İleri's Jamesian configurations are germane — indeed central — to a fuller understanding of the novel's narrative and thematic processes.[1]

Making the figure of James the linchpin of the formal and conceptual framework of *Bu Yalan Tango*, İleri also tackles the problem of how to creatively adapt the Master to Turkish literary culture. The intertexts in the last part of the novel encapsulate the history of the American writer's

1 A shorter version of this article was presented in 2011 at the 6th Annual Association of Adaptation Studies Conference ("The Silk Road of Adaptation") in İstanbul, Turkey. All translations are mine.

reception in Turkey. James is invoked through 1950s İstanbul staging of *The Heiress,* Ruth and August Goetz's play based on *Washington Square:* directed by Müfit Kiper, this production happens to be one of the Master's earliest, albeit indirect, manifestations in Turkey. İleri brings the history of the Master's Turkish reception up to date by alluding to "The Master at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 1914-1916" - a Joyce Carol Oates story translated into Turkish in 2009. The Jamesian intertexts in *Bu Yalan Tango* are thus given a highly original cross-temporal and cross-cultural emphasis.

The first part of the article provides an overview of the development of İleri's interest in James. The second part discusses narrative technique in *Bu Yalan Tango*, which displays interesting affinities with the Jamesian method of the central consciousness. By focalizing two characters — one female, one male — in an inventive way, the novel admits the possibility of a queer reading: as will be discussed, the references to James's ambiguous sexuality provide additional impetus for such a reading.[2] The third and fourth parts analyze how the Jamesian intertexts further the novel's queer premises, which are embedded in its feminist agenda: the protagonist Fatma Asaf's personal and professional troubles are linked to the sexist imperatives of a society built upon gender discrimination, while a queering complication is introduced into the plot when Fatma Asaf is taken to task for her heteronormative assumptions. The Jamesian intertexts also sum up İleri's views about the pressures facing Turkish writers today, an issue addressed in the concluding part.

Selim İleri Reads Henry James

It would not be wrong to state that Henry James's presence in the Turkish literary scene is quite recent, at least for the generation of Selim İleri, who was born in 1949. James was first introduced into Turkish in 1963 through Naciye Öncül's translation of "The Middle Years" and Necla

2 Especially trenchant since the rise of queer theory and criticism, debates about James's ambiguous sexuality continue to involve biographers, critics, and creative writers alike. See Savoy for an overview of the different perspectives offered by James biographers on his sexuality. Savoy also discusses Colm Tóibín's *The Master*, one of several recent fictional treatments of James's life. Critical assessments uncovering (or questioning) queer subtexts in James's fiction are copious: for an influential early reading of "queer" James, see Sedgwick's "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic."

Aytür's translation of *Daisy Miller* (also 1963). In an article entitled "Çeviri Üzerine Düşünceler [Thoughts on Translation]," Aytür deplores the belated appearance of James's works in Turkish. She observes that as James's "style and content" present difficulties for readers, Turkish publishers showed no interest in his works for a long time (160). İleri's initial encounter with James as a reputedly difficult writer corroborates Aytür's observation. He first read about the author in the 1964 edition of *Büyük Yazarlar* [*Great Writers*], published by Varlık:

> Henry James, one of the masters who paved the way for the twentieth century novel, represents a problem of unintelligibility in *Büyük Yazarlar* [*Great Writers*]: "The author's imagination reached such dizzying heights in these novels that perhaps only a few patient readers have been able to appreciate him for four decades."
>
> Reading these comments, I used to wonder what happened afterwards [after four decades]. And, because not a single work by Henry James had as yet been translated into our language, I did not know what to make of that 'imagination' of the dizzying heights. (İleri, "Büyük Yazarların Hayathikâyeleri [Life Stories of Great Writers]" 213).

İleri eventually became a faithful reader of the Master in Turkish. In his articles, he refers to the novelist several times, discussing *Daisy Miller* and *Washington Square* in particular.[3] İleri also follows critical as well as fictional works written about the Master. In one recent article he praises Ünal Aytür's *Henry James ve Roman Sanatı* [*Henry James and the Art of the Novel*], the only book-length critical study on the Master available in Turkish so far (İleri, "Henry James'in Çevresinde [Around Henry James]" 75). In another review article which came out a few months before *Bu Yalan Tango*, he comments on Zeynep Çiftçi Kanburoğlu's translation of Joyce

3 See "Henry James'in Bir Romanı [A Novel by Henry James]" for his review of *Washington Square* and "Bir Kez Daha Henry James [Henry James Once Again]" for his commentary on *Daisy Miller*. In "Henry James'in Çevresinde [Around Henry James]," İleri refers to both works.

Carol Oates's book of short fiction, *Wild Nights!* (2008): among the five stories in the book on Poe, Dickinson, Twain, James, and Hemingway, İleri singles out the one on James for extended discussion, which is a further proof of his special interest in the Master ("Bir Kez Daha Henry James [Henry James Once Again]"). As will be discussed in the third part of this article, Oates's story becomes one of the pivotal intertexts in İleri's novel.

Jamesian Reflectors in *Bu Yalan Tango*

James thought "that the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations" (62). In his book on the Master's novelistic art, Ünal Aytür explains that an intense representation of a character's inner world meant, for James, the reduction of authorial intervention to a minimum:

> The solution that he found was one which was situated somewhere between omniscience and first-person point of view. As with omniscience, the novel is narrated by the writer-narrator in the third-person, but everything in the story, as with the autobiographical method, is presented as perceived and observed by one specific character (36-37).

Using James's term "the reflector" for the character thus singled out, Aytür explains that later in his career James also made use of more than one character as reflector, or center of consciousness. In *The Wings of the Dove*, there are four, and in the *Golden Bowl*, two reflectors: "Each of these characters perceives and interprets everything from his/her own viewpoint" (113).

What makes *Bu Yalan Tango* unique in İleri's oeuvre is its intricate and sustained counterpointing of two reflectors in a Jamesian manner. Among his novels, only *Yarın Yapayalnız* [*Solitude Tomorrow*] (2004) comes closest to *Bu Yalan Tango* in its double focus, but otherwise the narrative technique is altogether different: *Yarın Yapayalnız* uses the first-person point of view, making a frame narrator (an author-figure clearly meant to represent İleri himself) transcribe and annotate the narrative of a second narrator. The two narratives remain discrete, with parenthetical comments, footnotes, and

spaces between sections indicating the shifts from one narrator to the other. In *Bu Yalan Tango*, by contrast, it is the impersonal third-person narrator who mediates the novel's bifocal emphasis, facilitating continuous, almost imperceptible, transitions from one character's mind to that of the other.

The first reflector in *Bu Yalan Tango* is the protagonist Fatma Asaf who, after a long life of personal and professional struggles, has to come to terms with her repressions, obsessions, and failures. In this, she is both aided and tested by the second reflector, Ufuk Işık, a novelist in his fifties who interviews her for a book in her honor. In his turn, Ufuk Işık has to gauge his own limitations, faced by a senior colleague who sets a formidable example. Whether engaged in conversation or lost in their own thoughts, the two reflectors variously augment, modify, and contradict each other's thoughts and emotions.

As mentioned above, İleri intensifies the narrative's Jamesian point of view by moving swiftly from one character's interior monologue to that of the other. In her article on *Bu Yalan Tango,* novelist and critic Erendiz Atasü finds the alternations between the two characters' minds so rapid that she sees them as occurring "simultaneously" (101). In her view, the novel can "leave a mark" in literary history by virtue of its synchronous juxtaposition of two streams of consciousness (101). İleri counterpoints the thoughts and emotions of the two reflectors in a highly evocative way. Consider the following sentence, which at first glance reads like a shorthand record of a conversation between Fatma Asaf and Ufuk Işık, a simple conversation where they exchange memories:

> That summer, on her return from Venice, maybe that summer, she was going to quote lines from Goethe as an epigraph to the novel she was writing; lines that Ufuk Işık had memorized as a budding youth (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 6).

In these lines, the seamless flow of Fatma Asaf's memories into those of Ufuk Işık appears to emphasize their common literary sensibilities: both admire Goethe. However, if the sentence is read as one which registers both the spoken dialogue *and* its immediate reverberations in each character's mind, then an agonistic subtext also shows through. Which character makes a mental note of Ufuk Işık memorizing Goethe's poetry "as *a budding youth*" (emphasis added)? Is it the senior novelist Fatma Asaf, who feels

happy that she has got the measure of her younger colleague? Or is it the not-so-junior-anymore Ufuk Işık, who feels annoyed with her playing the headmistress with him? By combining the merits of the Jamesian reflectors with his deft handling of interior monologue, İleri achieves a total that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Whether in collusion or in collision, the two reflectors' streams of consciousness demonstrate a permeability that allows for a queer reading of the novel: the narrative point of view emerges as a formal device perfectly fitted to the novel's agenda. As Rina Kim observes: "the crossing of gendered voice" in narratives "disrupts the dualism of male and female subjectivities, creating tensions, ambiguities and double meanings that indicate the significance of slippage, hybridity, and uncertainty" (4). The interpretational possibilities signaled by the novel's narrative point of view reveal their full potential in the characterization of Fatma Asaf, who alternately conforms to, puzzles over, or resists gender(ed) and sexual norms. In the last part of the novel, İleri uses several Jamesian intertexts in order to combine his feminist and queer analysis of Fatma Asaf's quest. The first of these intertexts is the Ruth and Augustus Goetz play *The Heiress*.

Jamesian Intertexts: *The Heiress*

The Heiress is introduced into *Bu Yalan Tango* through a 1951-52 İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu [İstanbul Municipality Theater] production, which was staged under the title *Miras* [*The Bequest*] (And 670). By focusing on this specific production of the play, İleri places the Turkish reception of the Master within a historical context: in the 1950s, James's novel both did not exist (none of his works had yet been translated into Turkish) and did exist (*The Heiress,* based on the novel, had been staged in İstanbul). Absent yet present, *Washington Square* as intertext in *Bu Yalan Tango* reinscribes the history of Henry James's gradual emergence into Turkey's literary culture.

Besides highlighting the Master's historical progress in Turkey, the allusions to this specific production throw the intersections between the novel's feminist and queer agendas into sharper relief. In the last part of the novel, Fatma Asaf remembers the performance of Samiye Hün, the actress who played the part of Catherine Sloper. The effort she spends to recall the

details of the production is evident in the repetitious language, the missing main verbs, and the abrupt shifts in tense:

> The old girl climbing the stairs under the dimming, melting spotlights. Just then the spectators start applauding. There were knocks banging banging! on the door [...] The actress, both lost in her part and independent of it now, to an extent having become herself, as the curtain slowly falls, on the top of the stairs.
>
> "Bravo Samiye! Bravo bravo!" (363)

At first glance, the allusions to *The Heiress* frame Fatma Asaf's story as a traditional heterosexual romance, complete with an unhappy ending. In the final scene of the play — the one Fatma Asaf remembers — Catherine Sloper finally decides to turn down her suitor Morris Townsend, a charming but fickle man who may well be after her wealth. With Morris furiously knocking at the door, Catherine refuses to let him in and climbs up the stairs with a lamp in her hand (Goetz and Goetz 87). Fatma Asaf's Townsend is the critic Fikret Demiray, who remains an enigmatic figure throughout the novel. Frustrated by a long drawn-out courtship that eventually peters out, Fatma Asaf later marries and has a daughter, but she never forgets her love for Demiray: she refers to herself as "a married old maid" (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 362). The parallels between Fatma Asaf of *Bu Yalan Tango* and Catherine Sloper of *The Heiress* are obvious — each is an old maid who cannot forget the man she desperately loves, but is proud and strong enough to live without him.

And yet, there is something more to the appellation "married old maid" than meets the eye. A contradiction in terms, it points to Fatma Asaf's unfulfilled longings. Analyzed from a feminist perspective, her deep dissatisfaction with her ostensibly "normal" life as a wife and mother results from the dictates of a patriarchal society that reduces womanhood to reproductive sexuality within the institution of marriage. Goaded into wedlock by her grandmother, Fatma Asaf lived a sexually and emotionally uninspiring life with her husband. Nor did she find solace in motherhood: her feelings of guilt over her distanced relationship with her daughter suggest that both of them have paid the price for her reluctant initiation into marriage and motherhood.

If a feminist reading might interpret Fatma Asaf's predicament as one conditioned by patriarchal injunctions over women, a queer critique would analyze it as one caused mainly by her own acceptance of a heteronormative order that prescribes reproductive heterosexuality. In her groundbreaking book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler argues that, in order to implement reproductivity as the be-all and end-all of sexuality, heteronormative society creates "performative" standards whereby the individual is expected to "perform" essentialized gender roles:

> Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. [...] In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality (173).

Butler's theory of performance and performativity sheds light on Fatma Asaf's quandary over the gender roles she is assigned or assigns herself. Although she fails to fully articulate it, Fatma Asaf in fact experiences both motherhood and old maidhood as performance. As discussed above, she does not fully embrace motherhood, only going through the motions. Her role as old maid is also nothing but a performance: as she reflects on Samiye Hün's performance in *The Heiress*, she imagines herself playing the part of Catherine alongside the actress:

> In the theater, Tepebaşı Drama Stage, the famous actress on the stage, the spectators applaud, the lights fade, she climbs the stairs, and Fatma Asaf alongside her and now and till death by holding up the five-pronged candelabra made of glimmering brass (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 373).

Fatma Asaf's growing awareness of gender as performance is thus brilliantly literalized. And yet, she has internalized heteronormative

assumptions to such an extent that it takes her almost a lifetime to bring herself to question them. What makes her awakening to the constructedness of gender all the more striking is the fact that she remains a heterosexual throughout the novel: instead of making a character with same-sex desire suffer the consequences of living in a heteronormative society — as he has done in some of his previous novels — İleri this time attempts the more difficult task of enabling a heterosexual protagonist to develop a sense of the artificiality of gendered roles.[4] He initially shows Fatma Asaf to be quite insensitive to people who do not conform to heteronormative standards: with a lesbian acquaintance, for example, she is contemptuous (74-5, 272). Then, he makes her jolt out of her complacency by getting her involved with a character who has to perform the socially sanctioned role of heterosexual masculinity. As Atasü succinctly explains, this character is Fikret Demiray:

> She loves only one man: Fikret Demiray. This man is a socialist and a humanist intellectual, and, although hinted at throughout the novel but explained only at the end, a homosexual. The young Fatma of course has no inkling of the phenomenon of homosexuality. (105)

Atasü's comment adumbrates the social and historical forces behind Fatma Asaf's failure to see through Demiray's performance of heterosexual masculinity. As she was brought up in a heteronormative and homophobic culture, same-sex desire remained "unnameable" for her. Consequently, she preferred ignorance (or, perhaps, denial). Only towards the end of her life — and that of the novel — does Fatma Asaf begin to understand why Demiray had to keep up the pretense of courting her despite his sexual orientation. This explains why she is made to turn James over and over in her mind in the last part of the novel: the "unnameable" is sublimated in Fatma Asaf's thoughts, and in the narrative, through the figure of the Master.

4 Among the novels in which İleri explores same-sex desire as a central theme is *Cemil Şevket Bey, Aynalı Dolaba İki El Revolver* [*Cemil Şevket Bey, Two Revolver Shots at the Mirrored Wardrobe*] (1997). Partly inspired by the life of Turkish writer Nahid Sırrı Örik (1895-1960), the novel features a writer whose repressed sexuality leads to tensions both in his life and in his fiction. In *Yarın Yapayalnız* [*Solitude Tomorrow*] (2004), İleri creates a contemporary character who cannot live a free lesbian life.

And even James's sexuality is broached indirectly, subliminally, though the mediation of another Jamesian intertext: Joyce Carol Oates's "The Master at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 1914-1916." Fatma Asaf's thoughts of the Master are scripted by means of details borrowed from this story.

Jamesian Intertexts: "The Master at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 1914-1916"

Horrified by the ravages of World War I, the elderly Henry James of Oates's story tries to bring some relief to "the young, wounded and so often maimed and crippled soldiers" (Oates 164) by reading to them (157) or writing their letters for them (159). Similarly, Fatma Asaf imagines the Master to be "a volunteer caregiver to soldiers during the war" who "reads letters to soldiers with torn limbs, writes the letters of blind, paralyzed soldiers" (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 361). In Oates's story, James establishes an intimate relationship with a wounded officer called Lieutenant Scudder.[5] Oates does not mince her words as to the physical nature of James's attraction to Scudder:

> Abject in adoration, scarcely knowing what he did, Henry pressed his yearning mouth against the stump of Scudder's mutilated leg, that was damp, and warm, and bandaged in gauze, for the raw wound was healing slowly. At once Scudder stiffened against him, but did not push Henry away [...]. (Oates 173)

While *Bu Yalan Tango* does not contain such explicit details, Fatma Asaf's interest in James's sexuality is evidenced by her thoughts about Oscar Wilde:

> Poor Henry James – long life, he too is one of your cottage of zombies –, desolate heart, so

5 Although there is no biographical information as to whether James formed such close ties with any soldier during his hospital visits, Adeline R. Tintner argues that "his behavior as someone susceptible to male attraction became expressible and socially justified during this wartime situation." In her view, James's correspondence at the time suggests his "ability to experience satisfaction in the sublimated level of visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals in London" (230).

> he did stop freeze suffering, the one that he felt for dying soldiers. He had refused the greedy life of Oscar Wilde. He had become old maids in his novels stories. Helplessness is horrifying. Unlivedness is horrifying. But the desolate heart tried hard and finally kept writing happy old maids. (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 362)

Brief as it is, the reference to Oscar Wilde speaks volumes. It will be remembered that Wilde had been condemned to two years at hard labor for "homosexual offenses" in 1895 (Edel 437). In her story, Oates touches upon James's reaction to this incident as follows:

> (The Master had had no sympathy, indeed, for the "squalid tragedy" of his younger contemporary Oscar Wilde whose scandalous trial for "unnatural acts" with young men had captivated London in the 1890s, and had primly refused to sign a petition to alleviate the harsh condition of Wilde's prison sentence). (Oates 164)

The reason James himself gave for his refusal was that petitioning would have no impact on the authorities (Edel 439). Fred Kaplan argues that there were deeper reasons behind James's action. In his view, James "found Wilde's conversation pretentious, his presence vulgar, his sexual ambivalence and its association with art threatening to his own sexual identity and to his identity as an artist […]" (245). In her story, Oates shows James finally realizing the irony of his harsh treatment of Wilde. Now that he admits to his own same-sex desires, the elderly James at last attains an understanding of Wilde.

Fatma Asaf's sympathy for the conflicted James is qualified by a disturbing feeling that he nevertheless remained publicly compliant with the homophobic mores of his society. In her view, this led him to compromise his professional career as well: "[p]oor" James made do with writing about "happy old maids." Applying such lessons to her own life, Fatma Asaf now realizes that her complicities have contributed largely to her private and professional woes. Her unexamined heterosexism has stopped her from identifying Demiray's sexuality, leaving her burdened with emotional and sexual frustrations. (In an essay entitled "Bu Yalan Tango'yu Neden Yazdım

[Why I Wrote *Bu Yalan Tango*]," İleri notes that Demiray has contributed his share to her suffering by his failure to come out to her). Moreover, she finds that she has wasted her creative potential: like the James of Oates's story, who sadly realizes towards the end of his life that none of his characters "inhabited an actual physical body" (Oates 157), she could only write by "fogging, covering up, seeking secret languages" (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 56). The novel contains several passages that attest to how she has censored herself throughout her career. On one occasion, for example, she wrote a daring love-making scene, only to destroy it immediately: "You wrote it," she says to herself, "but tore it up; a married woman novelist" (269).

Towards a Conclusion: Queerness and Politics

Even as he uses Oates's story as an intertext to expand upon Fatma Asaf's conflicting feelings, İleri adapts it to his critique of what ails Turkish writers today. Oates's James is a highly individualistic character whose self-confrontation leads to highly eccentric reactions. For instance, he "purloin[s]" odds and ends belonging to soldiers (such as blood-stained handkerchiefs, "clumps of hair, a signet ring, a sock") and keeps them as "'sacred relics'" at home (Oates 165). In a sense, he is a descendant of Sherwood Anderson's grotesque characters, whose thwarted inner world is reflected in their outward appearance and actions. Fatma Asaf, on the other hand, is a figure of pathos who cannot devise any idiosyncratic, let alone eccentric, reaction against social strictures. "I am ninety," she berates herself, "and still conservative (İleri, *Bu Yalan Tango* 205). Because she was expected to marry, she married, although she could not find emotional and sexual fulfillment. As she had to make a living out of writing early on in her career, she produced innocuous, ephemeral works in keeping with the demands of the market. Even when she became an established writer, she was urged to steer clear of sensitive issues. One of these is the politically-motivated murder in 1948 of the famous leftist writer Sabahattin Ali, which haunts her throughout the novel. Although she desperately wanted to write about him, she was persuaded otherwise. Transported into the past in her mind, she imagines a scene where the murderer is questioned.[6] The scene

6 A man called Ali Ertekin was sentenced for the murder of Sabahattin Ali, and was pardoned before the completion of his prison term. The circumstances behind the murder have never fully come to light.

dissolves into the horrifying details of the murder, and culminates in her breakdown:

> I am Ali Ertekin. I have been tried as the murderer of Sabahattin Ali.
>
> She couldn't find the spectacles.
>
> Was it you who killed the esteemed story-writer?
>
> I can't speak out. They ordered me to.
>
> Who did?
>
> My dear little girl, do not get mixed up in these affairs!
>
> Why don't you write novels about young ladies, ingénues?
>
> How could you kill him?
>
> I killed because my patriotic feelings were hurt.
>
> What the newspapers wrote in the autopsy to the bones dug up to the partially rotten corpse for some reason his arms were missing for some reason his teeth disappeared into the earth….
>
> She shakes with the horror of the murder.
>
> Dear lady memories tear one apart. Do not smoke.
>
> Drink lots of water. Smoking kills. (344)

Coaxed patronizingly into submission, Fatma Asaf exemplifies the combined impact of social and political oppression on Turkish writers. In contrast to Oates's James, İleri's Fatma Asaf has to fight against so many debilitating forces that she is unable to realize her full individual potential. Both characters suffer from the conservative sexual mores of their respective societies; both live through politically explosive times. And yet, Oates's James is at least spared the plight of being silenced because of his political views. On the contrary, as a voluntary caregiver at St. Bartholomew's

Hospital, he feels elated to be given the opportunity to contribute to the war effort. Moreover, he is also allowed his privacy: when on his own he can be as quirky, even as grotesque, an individual as he pleases. For İleri's Fatma Asaf, on the other hand, the margins of individual expression are much narrower, even when in private. In exploring the similarities between his Fatma Asaf and Oates's James, then, İleri also reveals areas where the paths of the two characters necessarily diverge.

Serving as one of the intertexts that situate Henry James within the historical, narrative, and thematic nexus of *Bu Yalan Tango,* Oates's portrayal of her protagonist's sexuality also throws İleri's novel into relief as a queer project. Much more tentative than those of Oates, İleri's fictional excursions into Jamesian territory function as laconic examples of his approach to the intertwined perils of personal repression and political oppression in Turkey. At once present and absent to his Turkish followers, at once very close to and very distant from their world, the figure of James in *Bu Yalan Tango* provides a fascinating example of how two cultures can interact to inform each other.

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