Araştırma Makalesi / *Research Article*

"Biz Daha Ölmedik": Belirsizlik ve Kriz Zamanlarından Edebiyat

"We're Not Dead Yet!":

Literature in Times of Crisis and Uncertainty

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Öz

İçinde bulunduğumuz bu tarihi süreçte, COVID-19 pandemisi gündelik hayata dair pratiklerimizi oldukça derinden etkilemiş, gelecekte ise birçok alanda uzun vadede önemli yapısal değişikliklere yol açacağının emarelerini vermiştir. Şimdiye ve geleceğe dair bilinmezliklerin galebe çaldığı, insan olmanın tabi bir neticesi olan hazırlıksız yakalanmayı tecrübe ettiğimiz, takip edilen sosyal, ekonomik, mimari, vb. yaşam tarzlarının küresel ölçekte tehdit edildiği bu dönemde sanata, bilhassa edebiyata dönülmesi üzerinde durulması gereken bir konudur. En geniş ifadeyle toplumsal olayların birey üzerindeki etkilerini çeşitli açılardan ele alan edebiyat; geçmişte olduğu gibi yaşamakta olduğumuz pandemi sürecinde de bizlere hızla değişen bir ortamda tanıdık bir alan, başımıza gelenlere dair sorular sorarak alternatif projeksiyonlarda bulunmamıza olanak sağlayan önemli bir faaliyete tekabül eder. Bu bakımdan edebiyat bir haritacılık faaliyeti olarak ele alınabilir. Birtakım edebi eserler her ne kadar geçmişte yaşanılan salgınlara ve genel olarak kriz anlarına dair insanların tepkilerine yönelik önemli ipuçları verse de COVID-19 pandemisi geniş bir mekân ve zaman dilimine yayılmış, küresel ölçekli, oldukça girift ve yıkım gücü yüksek uzun soluklu bir süreç ve risk olarak ele alınmalı; bu doğrultuda politikalar ve planlar geliştirilmelidir. Bu bağlamda, Carolyn See'nin yaşanıp bitivermiş bir felaketten daha ziyade mahiyeti tam olarak bilinmeyen bir felaketin özellikle devlet ve medya tarafından öngörülmesini konu edinen There Will Never Be Another You isimli romanı tahlil edilecek, eserde değinilen ve içinde bulunduğumuz pandemi sürecini etraflı bir şekilde yorumlanmasında katkıda bulunacak hususlar ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kriz, salgın edebiyatı, belirsizlik, risk, edebi haritacılık*

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Abstract

During this historical process that we are all going through, the COVID-19 pandemic has already proven itself to be a paradigm-shifting event affecting everyday practices deeply and promising further structural changes in various realms. Due to its uncertain, anthropogenic, causally complex, catastrophic and global characteristics, the pandemic has distinguished itself from plagues of earlier times and natural hazards, and thus it marks a new form of crisis requiring novel ways of framing and action. Rather than a spectacular, instantaneous and catastrophic moment of calamity, the pandemic is to be considered in terms of a more complex, gradual process dispersed across time and the entire globe. Understanding such a novel type of crisis as comprehensive as possible and coping with it challenge past epistemes and practices of management and necessitate the participation of different disciplines. Especially in times of crisis and cultural uncertainty, literary works function as critical maps charting social, psychological, economic processes in intersectional and relational ways. They can offer significant insights especially in regard to the effects of "choices" concerning the definition, representation and management of COVID-19 on individuals and their everyday lives. The present study will examine Carolyn See's 2006 novel There Will Never Be Another You as a text engaging with the ironic, gradual, power-related dimensions of "dwelling in crisis" that are largely overlooked in mainstream media, political discourse and other disciplines.

Keywords: *Crisis, Pandemic Literature, Uncertainty, Risk, Literary Cartography*

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"Ours is indeed an age of extremity. For we live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror. It is fantasy, served out in large rations by the popular arts, which allows most people to cope with these twin specters. For one job that fantasy can do is to lift us out of the unbearably humdrum and to distract us from terrors, real or anticipated—by an escape into exotic dangerous situations which have last-minute happy endings. But another one of the things that fantasy can do is to normalize what is psychologically unbearable, thereby inuring us to it. In the one case, fantasy beautifies the world. In the other, it neutralizes it."[1]

From ancient cave paintings and mythological tales to today's science-fiction movies, storytelling has been fundamental for human beings in their attempts to position themselves in the world and make sense of the phenomena around themselves. In the well-known *One Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade, for instance, holds to the magical power

1 Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster", Against Interpretation and Other Essays, New York 1964, p. 224-25.

of storytelling to ensure her survival once threatened by the monarch Shahryar. Similarly, Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1353) narrates how ten characters flee plague-ridden Florence and seclude in a villa where they imagine a new beginning through a collection of 100 novellas they tell each other in the aftermath of the Black Death which caused the death of dozens of millions in Medieval Europe. Both frame narratives from two different historical, socio-cultural contexts demonstrate how storytelling provides real-world guidance on individual and social levels, a fact which has been re-emphasized recently when the COVID-19 has become a major driving force in social and cultural change. Interestingly, as the human condition has been increasingly marked with alienation, uncertainty and a so-called "new normal" due to the paradigm-shifting novel coronavirus, there is an identifiable turn to literature.[2] Some literary responses to past pandemics have been re-visited in order to explore the pivotal roles of literature in exploring the times of pestilence. For instance, fictional texts such as Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of Plague Year,* Albert Camus' *The Plague,* Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* and Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* have been reconsidered both by reading public and literary scholars during this historic moment that we have faced an unknown malice altering our everyday lives and proving to be a life-altering event already. As I seek to examine in the present study, literature, in such times of crisis when human beings have faced the ultimate fate of being unprepared and uncertainty has been a central condition, has appeared to be an already familiar sphere functioning as a space of solace and enabling humans to reflect on the past, present and future. This potential and privileged role of literature is especially relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike natural disasters and hazards, this pandemic, I argue, is to be considered in terms of a new, global phenomenon that can best be characterized by its ontological uncertainty, anthropogenicity, causal complexity, socially constructed, anticipatory and catastrophic features, which conjures up Ulrich Beck's notion of "risk". Beck, in his "world risk society thesis," argues: "Risk is *not* synonymous with catastrophe. Risk means the *anticipation* of catastrophe. [...] Risks are always *future* events that *may* occur, that *threaten* us. But because this constant danger shapes our expectations, lodges in our heads and guides our actions, it becomes a political force that transforms the world".[3] More precisely, the COVID-19 has already distinguished itself from catastrophic events such as earthquakes, avalanches or externally caused crises that are relatively easy to know and cover. Despite various attempts to know and explain this

2 For instance, it has been reported that fictional texts on epidemics have enjoyed top places in bestsellers list. Similarly, a solid number of online events, as a quick YouTube or Google search might reveal easily, have been organized to discuss the role of literature, and art in general, in times of pestilence. Also, many journals, like the present one, have published issues exploring the question what literature can teach us about crisis.

3 Ulrich Beck. "Living in the World Risk Society", *Economy and Society*, 35.3 2006, 9-10.

new crisis particularly by the modern institutions such as states, science and mass media, the pandemic still remains an uncharted territory. As I propose to investigate in the present study, literature, in this regard, plays a crucial, cartographic function in representing, exploring, and questioning a more ambivalent, complex, long-term "dwelling in crisis," to borrow Frederick Buell's formulation.[4] In so doing, I will first discuss the possibility of approaching literary works as a cartographic practice by referring to the potential uses especially when human beings have to navigate the uncharted times of crisis and uncertainty. To examine such theoretical considerations further, I will discuss Carolyn See's 2006 novel *There Will Never Be Another You* as a cartographic work dealing with uncertainty and global risks, such as international terrorism, bioterrorism and epidemics.

Literature, in general terms, engages with the question how profound social changes influence individual(s), and thereby has the potential of offering comprehensive, complex insights into the human condition. Without having to be "factual" in the sense modern sciences are required to be, literature enjoys a privileged status in enquiring social phenomena from simultaneously real and imagined perspectives. Being a contested site itself, it empowers human beings in terms of asking questions concerning what has already happened, what is happening and what may happen next. In so doing, literary works challenge their readers to go beyond the perspectives that are made available for them, particularly in mainstream media and political discourse. Especially in times of crisis and uncertainty of various sorts, literature, aside from providing human beings with some distraction from the new condition and with a sense of familiarity, can become a source for information to search for orientation and draw some conclusions by comparing the past happenings with the on-going crises. In this regard, the common patterns in capturing the experience of similar pestilences such as the so-called Black Death of the fourteenth century, the Great Plague of 1665 and the notorious "Spanish Flu" of the early twentieth century have been studied, and issues such as the initial denial, widespread rumors, ascribing the threat an outsider, foreign status have been identified in the literary responses dealing with them.[5]

4 Here, I owe to Sylvia Mayer's insightful article entitled "Dwelling in Crisis": Terrorist and Environmental Risk Scenarios in the Post-9/11 Novel," which analyzes See's novel and Jonathan Raban's *Surveillance* as risk narratives engaging with a variety of risks. Referring to risk research and risk theory, Mayer convincingly argues that the concept of dwelling in crisis "means living in the world risk society where it has become necessary to live with, and often to adjust to, various risk scenarios" (p. 81).

5 For instance, in an article published in New York Times on April 23, 2020, the Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk, affirming there are many similarities between past plagues and the current pandemic, suggests: "Throughout human and literary history what makes pandemics alike is not mere commonality of germs and viruses but that our initial responses were always the same". Pamuk points towards denial, "an anger against fate, against a divine will that witnesses and perhaps even condones

Especially because of the above-mentioned status of literature, it can be approached as a form of mapmaking. In the same way that cartography (literally, earth-writing) can be seen as a way of narrating a story, a literary work, in both written and oral forms, is indeed a "cartographic practice,"[6] a fact which has recently been explored by what I prefer to call spatially oriented literary studies systematically. Investigating the interdisciplinary work done with the participation of disciplines including but not limited to literary studies, geography and sociology, spatially oriented literary approaches such as geocriticism, literary geography and literary cartography have pointed towards the ways that literary texts function as spatial practices and metaphorical maps that represent social phenomena. Literary cartography, in particular, can be defined as "the practice by which writers figuratively represent, or attempt to represent, the social space of the narrative or text, as well as the relationship of the individual or collective subject to a larger spatial, social, and cultural ensemble".[7, 8] Based largely on Fredric Jameson's writings on the concept of "cognitive mapping" which refers to the "process by which the individual subject situates himself within a vaster, unrepresentable totality, a process that corresponds to the workings of ideology,"[9] Tally suggests that "exploratory, representational, and projective features"[10] are common to both narratives and map-making enterprises. More precisely, literary productions can both map the world, provide the readers with clearer sense of happenings and enable them project possible, alternative new worlds.[11] In this regard,

all this death and human suffering, and a rage against the institutions of organized religion," creating rumors, accusations and the spread of misinformation, the plague's "foreign" status and "malign intent," "unexpected and uncontrollable outbursts of violence, hearsay, panic and rebellion" as some common themes in the pandemic-related literary works. As in the fictional texts he examines in his article, Pamuk points towards the role of crisis in reminding us of the fragility of human life, "shared humanity" and the fact that "a similar anguish" brings human beings together. Similarly, in her online piece entitled "Pandemics from Homer to Stephen King: What We can Learn from Literary History," Chelsea Haith suggests that literary works have "a vital role to play in framing our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic" and explains how pandemic literature, ranging from classical texts to contemporary novels, might help us "mitigate racism, xenophobia and ableism (discrimination against anyone with disabilities) in the narratives that surround the spread of this coronavirus. In her reference to Camus' *The Plague*, Haith underlines the value of human contact "the value of human contact and relationships in the citizens of the plague-stricken Algerian city of Oran".

6 Robert Tally, "Adventures in Literary Cartography: Explorations, Representations, Projections", *Literature and Geography: The Writing of Space throughout History*, Ed. Emmanuelle Peraldo, Newcastle upon Tyne 2016. p. 26.

7 Robert Tally, *Spatiality*, Oxon 2013, p.25.

8 Likewise, Aritha van Herk claims: "Mapping, like language, is creation more than representation, and so it is not illogical to think of fiction as cartography. The only way a country can be truly mapped is with its stories," p. 80.

9 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham 1991, p. 51.

10 Tally, "Adventures in Literary Cartography: Explorations, Representations, Projections", p. 20.

11 For instance, at the beginning of 19th century, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* responded to the unleashed modernity and it bore witness to the modern emphasis on reason and progress once not controlled by questions of ethics and morality. The novel functioned as an alternative projection into the zeitgeist through speculating what the idea of progress without emotions and morality could bring to humanity.

narrating a story or a poem is also "a form of world-making, at least as much as it is a mode of world-representing".[12]

Such spatially oriented approaches highlighting the cartographic function of literary works offer a useful interpretative framework to think about the relevance and significance of literature especially in exploring the times of crisis, disorientation and cultural uncertainty caused by important social changes. Unlike the mainstream news reporting that focuses largely on the instantaneous, visibly spectacular moments of destruction or infection, such as natural disasters, most literary works, combining individual perspectives with social ones, engage more with the processes of imagining, anticipating, navigating a crisis and re-structuring life albeit with the calamitous repercussions of this new reality. Moreover, a great number of literary works have mapped human condition in alternative, simultaneously real and imagined ways by asking urgent questions that are largely overlooked in many scientific disciplines, such as political sciences and statistics. In the following, I propose to approach Carolyn See's *There Will Never Be Another You* from a literary cartographic perspective and investigate how the novel, without questioning the "reality" or objectivity of international terrorism and epidemics, explores the processes in which risks are made real and sheds light on the psychological, individual and socio-cultural effects of government and media-driven anticipation of an uncertain catastrophe on characters' lives and society as a whole.

There Will Never Be Another You (published in 2006) is a cartographic novel mapping the intricacies of living in the post 9/11 American society by bringing a number of individual and global risks such as international terrorism, viral epidemics and toxic pollution. The novel begins with Dr. Phil Fuchs' phone call and instruction her mother Edith Fuchs to open the television set and watch the media coverage of the catastrophic destruction of the World Trade Center. Having just lost her second husband after months of illness, Edith, who is also the homodiegetic narrator in some parts, sees the "[b]uildings on fire".[13] Thus, the initial part, named "Ain't Nothin' We Can Do," brings together personal tragedies with large-scale

Similarly, the human condition especially in the European continent as the waste land of horrendous world wars in the twentieth century was mapped by writers such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Albert Camus and Thomas Beckett. More recently, Toni Morrison's work has re-visited the grand narratives concerning the beginning of America, racism, and it has drawn attention to the untold (hi)stories of African American experience. Correspondingly, Morrison, in explaining the status of her art, suggests that she "want[s] to draw a map of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest" (p. 3), a project which can be extended to the aforementioned writers as well. The "literary maps" such writers came up with, I argue, differed significantly from the political, ideological and scientific "narratives" of the time and offered more complex, intersectional, deeper pictures of human condition.

12 Tally, *Spatiality*, p. 49.

13 Carolyn See, *There Will Never Be Another You: A Novel*, New York 2007, p. 6.

events such as the destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. The second part, named "The Lonesome Road," is set mostly in the waiting room of the UCLA Medical Center in the year 2007. Being already immersed in the government and media driven risk discourse on international terrorism and bioterrorism and feeling entrapped in his unhappy marriage with Felica, Dr. Fuchs comes across the corpses of three feral cats on UCLA campus, which makes him more anxious and uneasy about the rumors that the government conducts secret tests on the campus, where he works as a dermatologist. One day, he gets called by Colonel Robert Davies, who is a government officer dressed "in a military uniform with a fair amount of ribbons"[14] and leads a confidential research team set up by the government. Dr. Fuchs receives an invitation from the Colonel to meet him in an unnumbered room in the UCLA Medical Center. The Colonel asks Dr. Fuchs to be part of the government's task force, offering him the "real opportunity to serve the country and perhaps humanity itself".[15] He accepts the offer unwillingly and attends the mandatory training sessions held in the UCLA Med Center. Yet, both Dr. Fuchs and other scientists in the team are only instructed to be ready for the unknown yet anticipated catastrophe without being provided with any further information about it. In a conversation between a so-called "camouflage guy" and Mr. Davenport, a scientist taking part in the confidential research team, the latter voices his concerns about this ironic act of getting prepared for something they do not know yet:

"Davenport had taken off his mask and hood. He looked at them, held them up to the fluorescent light. 'Where's the filter?' he asked. 'How do we breather in these things?'

'It's taken care of,' the camouflage guy said. "It's experimental. It's in there. It's timed to activate in a timely fashion.'

'I don't think so,' Davenport said. 'There's nothing here, that I can see.'

This ticked the camouflage guy off. 'You're not paid to think, soldier! You're here to do what we tell you to do! The future of the country depends on your getting the picture the way we tell it. This is the possible end of the world we're talking about, and there's no joke to it.'

'There's no filter here,' Davenport said. 'You want to let us in on what you're doing?'

'This is a test. And you flunked it!'

[...] 'Just one squirt in the air vents. Or someone lights up a piece of artificial wood for a backyard barbecue or squirts some shit on some charcoal, and there goes the party! Someone drops a teaspoon of something

14 See, *There Will Never Be Another You*, p. 96.

15 Ibid, p. 97.

in your cafeteria steam table, and the building goes toxic within ten minutes!'

'But you must think it dissipates fairly quickly,' Davenport persisted. 'It must. Because there's no breathing apparatus here.'

'Get it through your head, soldier. You flunked the test. You weren't even halfway there. You're dead.'"[16]

During such so-called information sessions, all the team members are asked to behave like responsible soldiers. As part of the scientists' training, a few guided tours to the strategically important areas in Los Angeles area [17] are organized particularly to increase the team members' risk awareness and help them internalize the manufactured reality positing the nation as being at risk. Again, in such trips, any information concerning the "nature" of threat is withdrawn, and the participants are instructed to be prepared for some forms of terrorist attacks or epidemics: "Something terrible was going to happen. That was all they needed to know. They were told to be vigilant, that an event of some kind was pending".[18] As a result, Dr. Fuchs, like many other team members, becomes more anxious, disillusioned and even paranoid.

Amid the narrative's dystopian atmosphere, a subplot thematizing the love story between Andrea and Danny, an American girl and a Chinese immigrant boy, is introduced in the third part, which is entitled "The Way Young Lovers Do". They notice one another first in a poetry class, and meet once again in the cafeteria of the UCLA Med Center. Both Andrea's father, who suffers renal failure and Danny's uncle are hospitalized in the UCLA Med Center. Despite socio-economic differences and mutual prejudices between the two, Andrea and Danny persist in their love in this dystopic, sullen atmosphere. The next part, named "Be Thou My Vision," begins with Dr. Fuchs's breaking up with his wife. Furthermore, two immigrant sisters die contentiously in the UCLA Med Center. Besides, a few environmental disasters such as "a three-hundred-mile fire line"[19] and serious fevers that "flare up all over the southern part of the state"[20] are mentioned by the heterodiegetic narrator, but the causes of them remain unknown: "So, was it Muslim fanatics? Ecoterrorists? Or just plain arsonists?".[21] In the meantime, the schools get closed earlier than the planned time, the walls of public buildings such as The UCLA Med Center are covered with

16 Ibid, p. 106-07.

17 Ibid, p. 108.

18 Ibid, p. 113.

19 Ibid, p. 175.

20 Ibid, p. 175.

21 Ibid, p. 175.

posters reading "LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS" or "WASH YOUR HANDS", and shops and restaurants become empty.[22] Towards the end of Part 4, the narrative brings together all the major characters in the UCLA Med Center where a security drill, or a rehearsed catastrophe, takes place. Danny's hospitalized uncle dies, and his kidney, after overcoming cultural prejudices, is transplanted to Andrea's father. Simultaneously, Dr. Phil, getting extremely anxious and neurotic due to the institutionalized risk discourse, takes along his son and joins a freighter named *Andorra* to work as a doctor at sea for the rest of his life.

The novel's last part, entitled "Into the Mystic" covers a time span between 2007 and 2016, describes how Dr. Fuchs and Vernon re-establish a father-son relationship on *Andorra*. The novel ends with Edith and Phil's email and letter correspondence through which the reader is informed about Andrea and Danny's happy marriage and the overall condition in Los Angeles area. Apparently, the catastrophe as anticipated by the institutions such as the government, security experts and the media has not taken place: "The 'real war' hasn't happened yet. Many little ones have. Epidemics and chemicals and explosives have ravaged certain parts of the globe—the trick, I suppose, is to stay off the beaten track, whatever the track may be. The talk is mostly about China now. The 'yellow menace' all over again [...] Not dead yet is the category by which we describe ourselves".[23] The homodiegetic narrator notes that "there is terror and war somewhere, and sure, we all will die [..] but we're not dead yet!".[24]

As this brief summary may already suggest, See's novel explores the implications of living with the institutionalized risk discourse that anticipates a particular catastrophe caused by international terrorism as the only risk and thereby legitimizing its precautionary security measures at the expense of curbing individuals' rights and bringing socio-cultural processes to a standstill.[25] Functioning as an alternative map charting the post 9/11 American society, the narrative demonstrates how individual characters get ironically more anxious and scared as they become immersed in the particular risk discourse as defined, staged and represented by the government and mainstream media. Both Dr. Fuchs' family life and his

22 Ibid, p. 181.

23 Ibid, p. 240-41.

24 Ibid, p. 242.

25 Elsewhere, I examined why and how risk definitions should be considered in terms of power relations. The question "who has the power to define certain phenomena as risk, ascribe criticality or non-urgency and take respective preemptive action?" is indeed related to certain political, ideological choices. For more about this, see Tabur, pages 185-88. Similarly, Ulrich Beck, in his article entitled "Living in the World Risk Society," argues that "[r]isk definition, essentially, is a power game [and] [t] his is especially true for world risk society where Western governments or powerful economic actors define risks for others" (p. 333). For him, "even the most restrained and moderate objectivist account of risk implications involves a hidden politics, ethics and morality" (p. 333).

flat, in which his wife Felicia feels claustrophobic and depressed, seems to be pervaded by anxiety, fear, and crisis. The reader is told that their flat, just like many other physical locales in the narrative, has a television set, and the news reportings such as "FOUR SUSPECTED TERRORISTS CAPTURED ON THE GROUNDS OF SAN ONOFRE NUCLEAR PLANT. ALL REPORTS OF POSSIBLE RADIO-ACTIVE LEAKS DENIED"[26] or "Chemical weapons, another SARS-like case in Malaysia that sent the stock market down, flu in northern Europe, bubonic plague in one of the stans —Tajikistan?—pneumonia in Egypt, another chase on the 405, with the driver holding a gun to his own head. That security-level thing gone up a notch again, but they wouldn't say why,"[27] broadcasted programs such as "police drama,"[28] "medical shows,"[29] and medical drama all contribute to the characters' anxiety. Similarly, as a telling example of this heightened fear among citizens in the public space, the protagonist, Dr. Fuchs, accidentally hits a Mexican woman while driving in the Meadow Oaks parking lot. The woman's sons immediately circle the car and threaten Dr. Phil who, in turn, "[takes] a look around for the security guard".[30] He expects the supermarket guard to come his aid in vain, and admits: "You couldn't blame the guy for not coming over. Everybody was afraid now, of everything. Anybody could be armed, or have a bomb. Or a disease. Or all three".[31] Similarly, at a crucial point in the narrative, Phil and Jack, another scientist in the confidential team, feel "like they couldn't go home" after a task-force meeting at the UCLA, visit a club named Palomino. While drinking there, they witness to a guy's shouting at "a pudgy man with fat cheeks and a pursy little mouth".[32] This "pudgy man" appears familiar to Dr. Phil as well: "He was a security guy all right, the guy in charge of carrying out some Plan. [...] And which one was he? The Homeland Security guy? The Born Again guy? Or the new Intelligence guy? They look alike, Phil thought".[33] The man's shouting reveals how the government's security measures cause individuals to be more anxious and cause other forms of risks and negative effects on individuals: "You took away my civil rights. My civil rights. [...] *That's* no security. That's only security for *you*".[34]

See's novel thus points towards the discrepancy between institutionalized, mainstream assessment of risks and the individuals' experience of them. The initial reference to the 9/11 attacks, in this regard, is of pivotal importance, for it informs the ways the government approaches

26 See, *There Will Never Be Another You*, p. 57.

27 Ibid, p. 170.

28 Ibid, p. 113.

29 Ibid, p. 113.

30 Ibid, p. 59.

31 Ibid, p. 59.

32 Ibid, p. 114.

33 Ibid, p. 115.

34 Ibid, p. 116.

other risks. More precisely, the institutionalized discourse as practiced by the government and represented in the mass media reduces all kinds of individual and social relations to security concerns and thereby justifies its "choices" of preemptive action in the name of avoiding the anticipated catastrophe that is thought to be coming from outside the nation. The novel's references to myriad individual perspectives and responses to the discourse of international terrorism, bioterrorism and epidemic conjures up Ulrich Beck's notion of "dark irony".

It has been already suggested that literary works have the potential of mapping social phenomena in diverse, alternative ways. Correspondingly, *There Will Never Be Another You* represents other forms of crises or risks depending on one's point of view and socio-cultural background. For instance, when Andrea visits Danny's flat located in Chinatown, the reader is informed about this disadvantaged area where immigrants predominantly live and the cultural prejudices between different social groups within the city are charted by the narrator. When Andrea and Danny walk to visit the former's house, the latter notices how all the students keep looking at him and experiences "a tomb feeling" in that upper middle-class neighborhood. Danny's sister concern about Americans' xenophobic attitude towards immigrants can be seen as a critique of the post 9/11 security-driven society. Additionally, the passages describing the task force's guided city tours reveal environmental degradation and other forms of risks that are largely absent in the expert discourse and mass media. For instance, in Marina del Rey, the beach is slick with oil and it, according to their leader, is "so polluted that terrorists wouldn't even have to do anything; just stand back and wait five years and kids would start to be born with three eyes".[35] Furthermore, the heterodiegetic narrator notes San Luis Obispo, "where the atomic plant made the population goners for a hundred miles in every direction".[36] Besides, the narrator point towards briefly to the "unseasonably hot" weather [37] and some fevers "that flared up all over the southern part of the state".[38] Such references to climate change and epidemics are largely unnoticed. In short, the novel, referring to such diverse non-spectacular processes and risks affecting individuals' everyday experiences, goes beyond the dominant discourse that represents and practices the whole city as the monolithic background of international terrorism. In so doing, it adds to the visibility of "slow," accretive forms of violence, crisis and problems that are out of sight and underrepresented in mainstream political discussions and media.

As I hope to have shown in my analysis of Carolyn See's novel, literary texts can be approached as maps exploring the complex, relational and intersectional processes in which important phenomena are both socially

35 Ibid, p. 110.

36 Ibid, p. 110.

37 Ibid, p. 177.

38 Ibid, p. 175.

and individually experienced. The majority of broad, large-scale social approaches either limit their foci to the instances of calamity or bring systemic explanations, and thus subjective perspectives as well as processes dispersed across time and space are often overlooked. Literature, without having to be entirely fact-based or exclusively fictional, offers more nuanced insights into the times of crises. In so doing, literary works do not offer any universally valid prescriptions. On the contrary, they pay attention to the diverse, complex processes, such as social, economic, psychological and cultural ones, in negotiating a crisis situation. Considering Orhan Pamuk and other literary scholars' observations in regard to the common elements in "the great pandemic novels," such as denial, panic, accusing others, mass hysteria and circulating rumors already inform us about the ways pestilence should not be responded. See's *There Will Never Be Another You* however sets in a different historical, socio-cultural context and maps how risks, or "the anticipation of catastrophe" to use Beck's distinction once again, are made real discursively and socio-spatially. Instead of thematizing a spectacular, catastrophic moment of destruction, it represents the complexities of "dwelling in crisis" by neither denying nor getting hysteric about it, a condition which characterizes the COVID-19 as well. Because of its uncertain, complex, anthropogenic, global and catastrophic features, the current pandemic differs from earlier viral pestilences and such crises as earthquakes or tsunamis, and thus it requires new ways of framing and action. To refer back to Susan Sontag's insightful comment on the functions of fantasy in "times of extremity" as ours, literature, as a simultaneously real and imagined space, has the power of representing, speculating and questioning the social phenomena as well as exploring and projecting alternatives.

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