

‘CRISES’ OF MALE CITIZEN IN *AGANTA, BURINA, BURINATA* (1945)

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Abstract

In my thesis, I explore how male identities are constructed and reproduced in the post-Kemalist period (1940-1950) through an analysis of a novel, *Aganta, Burina, Burinata*, written in 1945 by Halikarnas Balıkcısı who is a member of a literary group called the Humanist Anatolianists. The importance of this group lies in their somewhat ‘original’ approach to the relationship between Turkish modernisation and Westernisation and the identity problem of the new Turkish Republic (1923) related to these processes. Humanist Anatolianists constructed a ‘unique Anatolian identity’ which enabled them to find the roots of Western civilisation in Anatolia and its ‘folk’.

I argue that the approach of the Humanist Anatolianists to modernisation, in terms of the tension between ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ identities and also in terms of their views on some aspects of modernisation and the modern nation-state (such as modern discipline and bureaucracy), is highly ambiguous – reflected through (mainly) male bodies in the novel which imply the instability of patriarchal authority in the context of Turkish nation state.

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Introduction

In my thesis, I explore how male identities are constructed and reproduced in the post-Kemalist period, namely the period of 1940-1950, through the literary works (focusing on one particular novel, *Aganta, Burina, Burinata*¹, written in 1945) of a literary group called the Humanist Anatolianists. The group consists of three people (two men and one woman): Azra Erhat, Sabahattin Eyuboglu, and Halikarnas Balıkcısı. What makes this particular group worth studying is that they provide a somewhat ‘original’ approach to the relationship between Turkish modernisation and Westernisation. Generic national discourses suggested taking ‘Western civilisation’ as a model for the nation state while retaining the ‘essence of the nation’, which led to a tension between national identity as something interiorised and as something imposed from ‘outside’ (see Kandiyoti 1997 and for an analysis in a wider context see Eisenstadt 2003). That the national identity was based upon denying the past, especially the Ottoman past, rendered the tension even more profound.

Humanist Anatolianists offered a ‘solution’, so to speak, to the identity problem of the new Turkish Republic founded in 1923 by developing a theory of the roots of Western civilisation in Anatolia and its ‘folk’. For the Humanist Anatolianists, whatever was identified with Western civilisation, from science to philosophy, had first developed in Anatolia. This unique Anatolian identity made it necessary to play down the ethnic Turkish identity and Islamic identity. Thus, they claimed Anatolians Turks were ‘a different kind of Turk and a different kind of

¹ This novel is among the 100 literary works recommended by the Ministry of Education in 04/08/2005. It is stated that the purpose is to recommend students some classic literary works that they can read in their free time; however, Turkish teachers are required to integrate them into the curriculum. The title of the novel is a nautical term, which roughly means ‘get the grip of *burina*’ (so that the ship sails faster). *Burina* is a rope controlling the windward mast.

Muslim'(Eyuboglu 2006: 2). This indicates that they tried to neglect elements such as ethnic or religious identities which bear the risk of interfering with the 'harmonious Anatolian identity' they constructed.

The formation of nation state cannot be separated from the 'invention of national culture' (Jusdanis 1991). The role of cultural products such as literary texts is crucial in the process of constructing national identities. In the case of *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata* the author's aim to convey his 'messages' interferes in the quality of the work. Some Turkish literary critiques point out that the plots of Balıkcı's novels are weak in general and his characters are not adequately developed (Belge 2006c; Naci 1997). In *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, too, the characters are bare and one-dimensional, which limits my analysis. That is why I take on an interdisciplinary approach to analyse the novel.

What indicates the significance of my research is that although literature on the Turkish 'woman question' exists (see e.g. Kandiyoti 1997), the construction of masculinities in the context of Turkish modernisation remains undertheorised. Furthermore, the Humanist Anatolians' ambiguous Turkish identity, reflecting the peculiar tension between being 'Turkish' and 'willing to be Western', has not been addressed at all in terms of its gendered dimensions. The modernisation process substantially affected and led to certain changes in patriarchal structures and dominant perceptions of national masculine identity. The period between 1940-1950 is particularly interesting because Turkey went through substantial economic, social, and political changes during this period and such changes reflected in the novel I am analysing allow me to trace new gender relations, particularly bonds of solidarity among men. I argue that the approach of the Humanist Anatolianists to modernisation, in terms of the tension between 'Western' and

‘non-Western’ identities and also in terms of their views on some aspects of modernity and the modern nation-state (such as modern discipline and bureaucracy), is highly ambiguous – reflected in a tense or uneasy relationship between the male protagonist and his father, as well as the state.

In the first chapter, I will briefly explain the key concepts I make use of in my analysis. Then, in the second chapter, I will give a brief historical account of Turkish modernisation starting in the mid-19th century, paying particular attention to its implications for new understandings of and debates around gender roles. I will divide the history of modernisation into three parts: the pre-Republic period (19th century-1923), the Kemalist period (1923-1940) and the post-Kemalist period (1940-1950). In the second chapter I will also situate the Humanist Anatolianists in this trajectory and give information about their place in Turkish literary tradition, as well as their influential position in leftist intellectual circles and to some extent in the state. In the third chapter, I will explain that a ‘crisis of masculinity’ is represented through the power relations between the father and the son, which coincide with new, tense power relations emerging between male citizens and the modern state. I will show that one significant characteristic of this twofold relationship is that it reveals disappointment and discontent on the part of the son/ male citizen towards his father/the state because the latter does not fulfil his/its responsibilities regarding ‘protection’ but maintains his/its restrictive role in the framework of social contract theory. In the fourth chapter, I will analyse the Humanist Anatolianists’ critique of modernisation carried out mainly through bodily representations. In other words, I will show that the male body becomes the site through which the ‘negative’ aspects of modernisation such as disciplining or paradoxically lack of ‘positive aspects of modernisation’ such as insufficient health care especially in rural areas can be observed. In the fifth chapter, I will explore the sea and the

sailing ship as metaphors for the reconstruction of masculinity. I will also analyse the extent to which I can define the ship as a space which represents 'the state of nature', again with reference to social contract theory.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework

In my thesis, since processes of what I continually refer to as ‘Turkish modernisation’ are under discussion, I will first explain the difference between modernity and modernisation, as defined by Madan Sarup who suggests that “[f]rom the point of view of German sociological theory, which is very influential, modernity implies the progressive economic and administrative rationalization and differentiation of the social world. (By differentiation is meant, for example, the separation of fact from value, of the ethical from the theoretical spheres)” (Sarup 1993: 130). Modernisation refers to “a diverse unity of socio-economic changes generated by scientific and technological discoveries and innovations, industrial upheavals, population movements, urbanization, the formation of national states and mass political movements, all driven by the expanding capitalist market,” (Sarup 1993: 131). While modernity implies universalism, modernisation can be defined as “the particular path each modernising country takes depending on their history and culture” (Gole 2007: 58). I explore in closer historical detail the broader issues of Turkish modernisation (late 19th century-1950) as they relate to my topic in Chapter 2.

Jurgen Habermas mentions different stages of modernity in relation to historical transitions: the one “we are, in a way, still the contemporaries of (...) first appeared in the midst of the 19th century” (Habermas in Foster 1990: 4). He states that one characteristic of modernity is that it “simply makes an abstract opposition between tradition and the present” and this, according to Habermas, is due to the “belief, inspired by modern science, in the infinite progress of knowledge and in the infinite advance towards social and moral betterment,” (Habermas in Foster 1990: 4).

Ilhan Tekeli briefly explains the four basic principles on which the project of modernity developed (Tekeli 2007: 19-20). First, in terms of economy, modernisation is based on capitalist relations of production and industrialisation. Related to these, commodification, paid labour, and a liberalist understanding of property ownership are the dominant characteristics of a modern society. The second principle is that modernity has a claim of being objective and universal. This leads to a “belief in the possibility of universal principles of law and moral values” (Tekeli 2007: 20). Third, modernity posits “the existence of individuals who are free from the traditional societal ties and who take their place in society as responsible citizens” (Tekeli 2007: 20). This last principle is related to the institutional structure of modernity. The new form of political organisation of modernity is the nation-state. Tekeli argues that “going beyond the local social relations and creating national identities were needed to constitute anonymous patterns of social relations on a national level” (Tekeli 2007: 20).

In the context of Turkey, modernity has been historically conceptualised in relation to an ‘opposition between the East and the West’ that undermines the universalistic claims of modernity. This conceptualisation has led to “a significant level of resistance against modernity” (Tekeli 2007: 32). In order to understand the ambiguous attitude towards modernity represented in *Aganta Burina Burinata*, I will draw on the term “non-Western modernities”² as defined by Nilufer Gole, among various definitions of modernity³. As Gole explains, the term suggests an attempt to explore the complex relations of non-Western countries with modernisation. “It is possible to produce ‘local’ knowledge as well as a critical reading of modernity itself by refraining from analysing non-Western countries through a ‘second-hand’ narrative of

² For Gole, Western countries roughly include western European and northern American ones. Non-western countries are the ones that are not in these regions (Gole 2007: 56).

³ Such as ‘multiple modernities’.

modernity” (Gole 2007: 59). Gole argues that the term further suggests non-Western countries are not mere recipients of ‘Western modernity’; on the contrary, these countries actively produce meanings related to modernity, which breaks the direct connection between ‘the West’ and modernity.

Nationalist discourse in the Turkish context includes a dualistic structure consisting of two seemingly contradictory ways of ‘imagining the nation’⁴. One of them is arcadianism – or the construction of the rural in an idealised way, which assumes a ‘pure and perfect’ past constituting the ‘essence of the nation’. The other is utopian Enlightenment thought, which looks ahead and idealises the future of the nation. Nationalist discourse oscillates between these two aspects, creating a certain type of ‘tension’ I wish to explore.

Unifying the nation in archadian or utopian ways can be understood in terms of containment through discourses which serve to exclude unwanted elements from the national imaginary. Foucault puts forward the principles of exclusion in modern societies when he explains the procedures of controlling and defining the limits of discourse (Foucault 1981: 221-2). One of the principles he mentions is the division between reason and madness. “You have only to think of the whole framework of knowledge through which we decipher that speech [madman’s speech], and of the whole network of institutions which permit someone – a doctor or a psychoanalyst – to listen to it, and which at the same time permit the patient to bring along his poor words or, in desperation, to withhold them,” (Foucault 1981: 222). The nation-state can be said to carry out a similar process in the construction of the nation. Within the framework of knowledge the past is

⁴ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, 1983, London: Verso

included in the modern discourse in a certain way. The past is constructed to serve the purposes of the present: a ‘tamed’ past, in the sense that the modern state includes and eliminates some elements in the process of constructing national identities.

My analysis of nationalist discourses in the 1940s involves the use of concepts of social contract, state of nature, and fraternity, all of which are closely related to the modern state since the “nationalists [...] did imagine the political community of the nation as a fraternity, a brotherhood of men, and in that sense as a structure of modern patriarchy” (Chakrabarty 2000: 217). In order to explain these terms, I will draw on works of Carol Pateman and Dipesh Chakrabarty. The modern or nation-state emerged as a coherent idea at the end of the 18th century (Anderson 1983), in the wake of paradigmatic events such as the French Revolution. With the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century revolutions there emerged a shift in terms of the basis of state legitimacy – what Anderson defines as the decline of “old principle of Legitimacy” – (Anderson 1983: 22) from ‘monarchy’ to the ‘people’ as the basis of sovereignty. Before this shift, in the context of what Pateman (1998) calls theories of ‘classical patriarchy’, in which absolute power was analogous with the power of the paterfamilias. Kinship was a key concept concerning the relationship among individuals and it suggests the rule of the father. The reason subjects had duties to the king was that the king provided protection in return. This pre-modern form of exchange was maintained in the theory of social contract in modern society as well. The difference was that “now the father comes under attack. The original contract shows how his monopoly of politically creative power is seized and shared equally among men. In civil society all men, not just fathers, can generate political life and political right. Political creativity belongs not to paternity but masculinity,” (Pateman 1998: 36).

The modern state, on the other hand, claims to be based on the principles of equality and fraternity rather than on the subordination of subjects to the king. Modern states presuppose that there is no centre or hierarchy in the community; in modern community fraternity stretches out to all men, to whom power is distributed rather than concentrated in the hands of the father (the king). Pateman defines this new form of state legitimacy as “modern patriarchy” (Pateman 1988: 25). What facilitates this new form of power distribution is the notion of the social contract⁵, according to which citizens relinquish some of their rights in exchange for social order. Although the same principle determining the relationship between the king and his subjects in the ‘pre-modern’ era – protection in return for obedience – applies in the relationship between the modern fraternal state and its (male) citizens, most social contract theorists claim a ‘clear’ moment of ‘birth’ for the modern state. In order to distinguish the modern civil or political order they create a ‘pre-social’ space: the state of nature, which exists prior to and outside civil and political order (Pateman 1988: 37). Lack of regulation in the state of nature makes it possible to provide a justification for citizens to take part in the contract; in other words, it is in the citizens’ interest to do so. In relation to this, contract theories imply a consensual community constituted by men who are free to consent (Pateman 1998: 24). Although contract theorists assume that the state of nature and modern community have nothing in common, the former must be considered as a residual category because, from a Foucauldian perspective, the state of nature is a construct of modernisation for the purpose of defining and controlling discourse. Therefore, nature vs. civilisation is a dichotomy with a twofold function: it enables modernity to define itself by providing contrast and serves to eliminate any inconsistencies within modernity by containing them within its limits. The latter function can best be observed in Rousseau’s view of the family

⁵ It is important to note that there is no single theory of social contract, but the term can take on different meanings depending on the theorist. For Pateman, Rousseau, Locke, and Hobbes are representative of social contract theorists because they, except for Hobbes to some extent, position the family outside civil society.

(Pateman 1998). For Rousseau, consenting to your subordination is not legitimate because he considers the contract as an exchange on an equal basis. However, he renders the type of relationships which already exist in the nature as exceptions. Rousseau posits a natural subordination or a gender order within the familial space which is translated into a special space outside civil society (Pateman 1998: 54). This view provides a basis for him to claim that the society can be coherent only through the regulation of the family by the state. Therefore, Rousseau's theory does not allow an analysis of the power relations within the family.

As for the notion of fraternity, I make use of Chakrabarty in order to explore how the notions such as fraternity and citizenship developed in the context of Western European modern political theory apply in the context of 'non-Western' modernisation, if not a post-colonial context (Chakrabarty 2000). Chakrabarty argues that the shift from the rule of the father to fraternity cannot be observed in Bengali modernisation because "[f]raternity in Bengali nationalism was thought of as representing a natural rather than contractual solidarity of brotherhood" (Chakrabarty 2000: 218).

Finally, 'crisis of masculinity'⁶ is the other useful term that I use in my analysis. The term suggests that there is a close link between insecurity in gender identity and economic changes. Kimmel contends that in the mid-19th century America, with the rise of the capitalism, a new version of masculinity – marketplace masculinity, emerged (Kimmel 1996, 1997). He associates this new type with the "first crisis of masculinity" because this new man derived his identity entirely from success in a new realm of production which was highly unstable – capitalist market

⁶ The term suggests that stable masculinities existed before 19th century, which can be considered as a problematic argument; however, this discussion falls outside the scope of my research.

economy lacked the security that the land as the source of income provided. This instability, in other words, loss of autonomy in the workplace brought about a masculine identity which was no longer fixed or secure. In my analysis, I consider this crisis as a symbolic one in the sense that it reflects the power struggle about gaining state legitimacy in the new national milieu and, as Kimmel suggests, ‘crisis of masculinity’ emerges in the context of economic crisis in Turkey which I discuss in Chapter 2.1.

I argue that construction of masculinities and particularly male bodies as a site of ‘crises’ are effective means of analysing the process of nation-state building. In my analysis, it is not only women who are metaphors for the nation as Yuval-Davis has suggested (1989, 1997) men and male bodies, too, have a symbolic relation to the nation as signifiers of ‘public order’, which in the Turkish context of the period lies between classical patriarchal and modern fraternal ‘models’. Therefore, I find it useful to analyse relationship between men, particularly father and son, in order to explore the economic, social and political transitions a country undergoes.

Chapter 2 Historical Background

2.1 Turkish Modernisation and 'its Discontents' in the 1940s

Turkish modernisation started with the period of the Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. Those administrative reforms were implemented between the years of 1839 and 1861, and followed earlier modernisation programmes dating back to the 18th century: “the first systematic attempts to understand the difference between the Ottoman and the European military system” (Kadioglu 1998: 179). Westernisation and modernisation are thus two processes completely intertwined in the Turkish context. During the reformation period in the 19th century, there were four main ideologies which were dominant in the Ottoman Empire; namely, Ottomanism⁷, Westernism, Pan-Turkism⁸ and Pan-Islamism⁹. Among these mainstream ideologies, Westernism and Pan-Turkism in particular played an influential role in shaping the reforms implemented in Kemalist nation-state founded in 1923, which can be regarded as the second ‘stage’ in the process of modernisation. Despite the fact that Kemalist modernisers claimed a complete break with the past, the process of nation-state building and Kemalist reformations which formed the basis of the new nation-state can be considered as a continuation of 19th century reforms.

The ultimate goal, for Kemalist modernising elites, was to transform Turkey into a modern nation state which, in the words of Mustafa Kemal, would ‘live as an advanced and civilised

⁷ Feroz Ahmad defines Ottomanism as “a dynastic patriotism to which all religious and ethnic communities could owe allegiance without sacrificing their own narrower aims and aspirations” (Ahmad 1996: 34).

⁸ Pan-Turkism, as defined by Carol Delaney “was a nationalist theory based on linguistic affinities with other Turkic-speaking peoples in Central Asia, Russia, and even as far as China, some of whom were at least nominally Muslim, while others practised local varieties of shamanism” (Delaney 1995: 180).

⁹ Pan-Islamism is based on the unity provided by Islam which was the major source of identity and the primary cultural context (Delaney 1995: 180).

nation in the midst of contemporary civilisation’ (cited in Ahmad 1996: 53). In fact, the motto of the period, frequently articulated by Mustafa Kemal, was ‘to reach to the level of contemporary civilizations’. ‘Contemporary civilisations’ implied that ‘the West’ – or Western Europe, to be more precise – was the benchmark against which Turkey set its goals and defined itself. The nation was imagined to be rational and the importance of science and modern education was emphasised, in order to create a modern industrial economy (Ahmad 1996: 53). Therefore, modernisation involved, according to both Ottoman and Kemalist modernisers, taking technological and scientific innovations from ‘the West’ and borrowing or exporting some ‘Western’ cultural patterns and adopting them into Turkish context. The crucial point here is that what was to be taken from ‘the West’ was considered to be the ‘material aspects of Western civilisation’. There was another important aspect; namely, spirituality or traditions, which constituted the ‘essence’ of the nation; thus they were to be preserved and at times protected against ‘the West’¹⁰.

The definition of tradition; especially for Kemalist modernisers, involved a process of selection. Some aspects of the culture were essential in the construction of national identity, but others were thought to be ‘backward’ and thus were to be eliminated. Islam, which was the predominant religion and set the primary cultural context for the majority of people as well, fell into the latter category. “The notion of an Islamic state was anathema to Mustafa Kemal and his supporters. They viewed such a state as the way to maintain the status quo and perpetuate the backwardness of Turkey,” (Ahmad 1996: 53). Behind this ostensible reason was the concern that Islam would compete with the new nation for people’s loyalty since Mustafa Kemal knew that

¹⁰ See Chapter 1 for “non-Western modernity”

“the primary loyalty of individuals is to the *umma*¹¹ rather than to the state” (Toprak 1981: 25; cited in Delaney 1995: 188). This concern accounts for the fact that the Kemalist understanding of secularism included not only a separation of state and religion, but also the removal of religion from public life (Zurcher 1994). And popular Islam was considered non-normative by the ruling elites (Mardin 2007). Secularism was a necessary instrument of populist ideology whose purpose was to establish the hegemony of the state and to stabilise the elite. That different religious groups had autonomy to a certain extent in the Ottoman Empire had challenged the hegemonic status of the Republic, and secularism had a crucial role in the formation of a ‘Turkish national consciousness’ – defined in contrast to the rest of the Islamic world.

The formation of a ‘Turkish national consciousness’ required a process of Turkish nation building in the twentieth century which was characterised by an ‘inevitable’ homogenisation of Turkish ‘ethnicity’, and which problematised (as ‘backward’) the cultural, ethnic, and religious pluralism of the former Ottoman Empire. These homogenising processes were embodied in Turkish modernisation and can best be observed in Mustafa Kemal’s populist ideology adopted by the ruling party: the Republican People’s Party. The populist ideology developed by Mustafa Kemal entailed establishing secularism, promoting the notion of Turkishness on the levels of organisations (e.g. Turkish History Association and Turkish Language Association) and social groupings, establishing Turkish as the official language, and claiming Turkish unity across borders for the purpose of homogenisation. The aim was to consolidate an official Turkish identity compatible and competitive with, but different from European models of the nation state. There was one other crucial element of homogenisation, which was the rejection of the fact that

¹¹ *Umma* refers to the Muslim community.

Turkey comprised people of different classes. This was even stated in the party programme of the Republican People's Party:

It is one of our main principles [noted a party document] to consider the people of the Turkish Republic, not as composed of different classes, but as a community divided into various professions according to the requirements of the division of labour for the individual and social life of the Turkish people. ... The aims of our Party, with this principle [of populism], are to secure social order and solidarity instead of class conflict, and to establish harmony of interests (The official translation of the RPP programme given in Webster 1939; cited in Ahmad 1996: 65).

The nation-state bore the claim that it was embracing all the people within the borders of the country on equal terms under the rubric of citizenship. However, despite the political discourse on equality and inclusion, in practice, some people were excluded from the definition of citizenship. What grounded this exclusion was that the concept of citizenship implied 'an ideal citizenship'. Considering that one significant characteristic of Turkish modernisation was that it was carried out in a from-top-to-bottom manner, some people found it difficult to identify with the somewhat abstract notion of citizenship. As Caglar Keyder suggests, in the context of Turkish modernisation, it was not just some specific groups for whom identification was an issue, but it was nearly everyone except for the modernising elites:

Turkish nationalism is an extreme example of a situation in which the masses remained silent partners and the modernizing elite did not attempt to accommodate popular resentment. The degree of popular sentiment that could be mobilized toward nationalist movements varied widely in the Third World, and Anatolian peasants were at the passive end of the spectrum. The masses in Turkey generally remained passive recipients of the nationalist message propounded by the elites (Keyder 1997: 43).

The attempts of modernisers to disregard the existence of different classes in Turkish society and the popular resentment were futile. As a consequence, the reforms undertaken in the second half of the 1920s had not taken root and the state's liberal approach to religion and to ideology in

general proved a failure. “The population was suspicious, sullen and resentful, unable to comprehend the new emerging order,” (Ahmad 1996: 61). The modernisers’ conception of ‘complete break with the past’ did not materialise for “during the five centuries of its [the Ottoman Empire’s] rule, it had created a vast network of institutions and loyalties, particularly religious loyalties, amongst all strata of society. Not even a revolution could destroy these overnight” (Ahmad 1996: 61). The 1940s was the period when social problems and corruption brought about by class-based inequalities started to become noticeable. At the beginning of the nation-state building process, the ruling elite had to form alliances with the rising merchant class and landlords who had the economic power, hence a great influence in the rural parts of the country (Oran 1988 cited in Moran 2006: 10). This political alliance contributed to the poverty of the Anatolian peasants to a great extent because it prevented an effective land reform which would have gained modernisers a significant amount of support from the peasants who constituted the majority of the population. Although a minority of people among early modernisers was aware of the importance of a land reform to decline the social, economic, and political power of the feudal lords and the rural notables, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) ¹² never considered such a change. Tithe which was the tax paid by peasants was a significant source of income and thus abolishing the tithe would have required a radical restructuring the system of taxation – a process the CUP was not willing to undertake. The following data indicates the necessity of a redistribution of lands for the peasants’ benefit:

In 1913, land was concentrated in a very few hands. The group described as feudal lords constituted 1 per cent of the population but owned 39 per cent of the land, while large landowners were 4 per cent and owned 26 per cent of the soil. On the other hand, 87 per cent who may be described as small and middle peasants occupied only 35 per cent of the land [...] (Ahmad 1996: 43).

¹² Committee of Union and Progress was a political organisation which came to power between 1908 and 1918. Some of its members such as Enver Pasha, Cemal Pasha, and Mustafa Kemal played critical political roles during the process of Turkish modernisation.

Ahmad states that instead of distributing land and providing cheap credits to peasants, the CUP “continued the The *Tanzimat* policy of strengthening the landlords by passing laws which extended their control over the peasants” (Ahmad 1996: 43). Hence peasants became alienated from the state. This policy continued during the Kemalist period. The main reason was that redistribution would have caused a sharp reduction in the size of the labour force available to the landlords, which was already scarce due to the Independence War (1921-2) in which the population had declined by an estimated 20 per cent. Thus the landlords opposed a land reform or any structural change in the countryside and The Kemalists complied with their wishes though they abolished the burdensome tithe in 1925; however, it was restored during the Second World War (Ahmad 1996: 74). Yet again the political power of the landlords prevented any effective land reform. As a requirement of the law, “between 1947 and 1962 about 1.8 million hectares were distributed to 360,000 families, with only 8,600 hectares being taken from privately owned land” (Ahmad 1996: 115). Since it was the state-owned lands which were distributed, the law did not enable peasants to have autonomy over land.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Turkey started to experience serious economic problems: prices rose steadily and inflation increased almost uncontrollably. And the state started to intervene in almost every aspect of Turkish life. For instance, “the National Defence Law of 18 January 1940 gave the government extensive emergency powers to control prices and the supply of goods in the market, and to use forced labour, especially in the mines” (Ahmad 1996: 70). Laws as such seemed to have an “arbitrary nature” (Ahmad 1996: 70) and sometimes they were implemented in a brutal way, which weakened the citizens’ confidence in the state and in the ruling party. Besides, by the end of the 1940s, the principle of secularism was being seriously

challenged (Mardin 2007) by the masses. All these factors resulted in the rise to power of a new ruling party (the Democratic Party).

After this brief account of the history of Turkish modernisation and some of the problems arose especially during the 1940s, I would like to focus on the changes in gender relations vis-à-vis modernisation. Kemalism managed to transform the status of women in public sphere vis-à-vis men and state institutions, which led to a significant difference in the conditions under which women lived especially compared to the pre-republican period. However, it is important to note that this was mostly limited to upper and middle-class urban women. Despite the dramatic changes in women's status in society, Kemalism did not succeed in eliminating the fundamental hierarchy designating the relationships between men and women. Saracgil contends that the reason for this 'failure' is that Kemalism did not problematise the sharp distinction between sexuality and sentimentality¹³, according to which sexuality is regulated in the 'Turkish-Islamic culture' (Saracgil 2005: 294). Sentimentality was considered to be a major threat to masculinity and the "cold rationality of military [which] constituted the basis of manhood in Kemalist thinking" (Saracgil 2005: 294) reinforced this division. The modernising elites were concerned with the transformation of relations between men as well. I will discuss this point in Chapter 3 especially in regard to late Ottoman novels and 'Turkish' novels of the later period.

¹³ This distinction can be related to the debate about 'the West' and its role in Turkish modernisation – or the distinction between 'materiality' of the 'West' and 'spirituality' of the 'East'. I discuss this point in detail in Chapter 3.

2.2 The Humanist Anatolianists

The Humanist Anatolianists is a literary group comprising three literature people, namely Azra Erhat, Sabahattin Eyuboglu, and Cevat Sakir Kabaagacli (a.k.a. Halikarnas Balıkcisi). As Kaya Akyildiz suggests each of the three has a different ‘role’ in the group: while Halikarnas Balıkcisi produced literary texts, Sabahattin Eyuboglu wrote essays to convey the political stance of the group (Akyildiz 2007: 469). The group had a strong influence on liberal leftist intellectuals.

The importance of this group lies in the ‘original solution’ they offered in regard to the problematic relation between Turkish modernization and ‘the West’. This ‘original solution’ can be traced in their conception of ideal education¹⁴, which is a common point they shared with Kemalists and their particular approach towards history. Although their conception of education and their approach to history are closely related to each other, it can be argued that while the former involves integration with the West, the latter searches for the ‘unique essence’ of the Turkish nation.

The Humanist Anatolianists’ theoretical approach is based on heterogeneous elements such as Humanism, Kemalism, and populism (Belge 2006: 282). However, whether all the members of the group truly have a Humanist approach has been problematised by some scholars as I will discuss later. Nevertheless, Enlightenment thought and Humanism provided the basis of the education conceived by the Humanist Anatolianists. They laid special emphasis on education through which they were sure that enlightenment and progress could be achieved. In accordance

¹⁴ This is the point in which the role of peasantry in the project of modernisation is revealing: peasants are defined as ‘people in need’ – in need of education.

with the humanist thought, Azra Erhat and Sabahattin Eyuboglu strongly argued that ancient Western languages must be taught at schools and they translated some Western classics into Turkish¹⁵. Translations were part of the cultural and educational policy carried out by Kemalist government in the 1940s. It is important to note that Sabahattin Eyuboglu actively took part in these policies not only as a translator but as an officer of the Ministry of Education as well¹⁶. Therefore, it can be stated that the group played a crucial role on the level of state institutions in the construction of ‘national culture’ which was considered an indispensable element of ‘national identity’ of the Kemalist project.

The emphasis the Humanist Anatolianists put on ‘the folk’ and how they defined it is closely related to the role of education in the construction of national identity. “The Humanist Anatolianists persistently referred to ‘the folk’ whom they believed to be pure and to have never involved in evil deeds,” (Akyildiz 2007: 472). They addressed ‘the folk’ in their essays with a didactic tone, which indicates how they defined ‘the folk’: masses that require educating. “When the folk are stripped off their ragged clothes of tradition, what will come out will be pure human beings. [...] They will be ready to be dressed again. This time the clothes will be designed carefully and they will be cut according to the rules of Reason,” (Bauman 1996: 85; cited in Akyildiz 2007: 473-4). The Humanist Anatolianists have an ambiguous approach in terms of ‘the folk’, too. This attitude can be observed in Eyuboglu’s essays. “On the one hand, Eyuboglu

¹⁵ Karacasu points out that Sabahattin Eyuboglu consistently neglected ‘materialist allusions’ in his translation of Montaigne and he and the others omitted some parts referring to sexual organs and criticising state officers in the original text of *Gargantua* by Rabelais. Therefore he argues that their priority was not to translate the classics into Turkish but to translate them insofar as the original text coincided with their conception of humanism and civilisation (Karacasu 2006: 343, footnote 1).

¹⁶ He was first an inspector then a member of the council which is responsible for designating the curriculum (Copeaux 2006: 351, footnote 60).

glorifies the folk even to the extent of fetishisation¹⁷; on the other hand, he infantilises them: ‘The worst case is to lie to children and to masses; they are both deceived very easily’¹⁸ (Eyuboglu 2006: 30)” (Yener 2006: 58).

The construction of a national culture required a conception of history for which the Humanist Anatolianists had a distinct approach. The Humanist Anatolianists, Halikarnas Balıkcısı¹⁹ in particular, endeavoured to overcome the dichotomy between ‘the West’ and Turkish modernisation by eliminating the dichotomy itself, which coincided with what the Kemalists needed in the process of constructing a ‘unique national identity’ (Akyildiz and Karacasu 1999: 33). In order to do so, they emphasised the importance of ‘embracing’ all the Anatolian civilisations²⁰ and they dedicated themselves to proving that the Western civilisations stemmed from Anatolia²¹. In order to provide a basis for this argument, Halikarnas Balıkcısı presumed a sharp distinction between Ionic and Hellenistic civilisations and he strongly argued that Ionic culture which he considered to be the only source of civilisation owed nothing to Greeks but to Anatolians (Akyildiz and Karacasu 1999). “Without Anatolia, there would be nothing” indicates the extent to which Anatolia means ‘vital’ to the Anatolianists (Erhat 1979: 169; cited in Karacasu 2006: 342). From this perspective, whatever should be taken from ‘the West’ is already considered ‘ours’ (Karacasu 2007: 476). Their approach is rather pragmatic and it allows them a significant amount of flexibility in terms of what to include and exclude. One example to indicate where the boundaries of the ‘Anatolian identity’ are drawn is the fact that they do not

¹⁷ One example to show the importance they gave to ‘the folk’ is that Eyuboglu contends that all the Eastern civilisations and the Ottoman Empire as well declined because they “lost touch with the folk” (Eyuboglu 2006: 19).

¹⁸ The folk seems to be an ambiguous metaphor since it also refers to a “beautiful and generous mother” (Eyuboglu 2006: 48).

¹⁹ Belge regards him as the founding father of the group’s political and historical approach (Belge 2006b: 282).

²⁰ Azra Erhat argues that it was Kemalist revolutions which enabled them to embrace all Anatolian civilisations (Erhat 2006: 16). This is another indicator of the close relation between Kemalism and the Humanist Anatolianism.

²¹ For different political approaches on the basis of ‘Anatolia’, see Mithat Atabay 2003: 515-532

mention Armenians as one of the Anatolian civilisations they are ‘willing’ to embrace²² (Copeaux 2006: 355-359). Etienne Copeaux states that “their aim was quite clear: embracing the Ancient era while distancing themselves from Asia – even rejecting it” (Copeaux 2006: 350). Interestingly Semih Gumus argues just the opposite: he notes that their perspective provides a basis for dismissing ‘the West’ (Aktan 2006). However, Eyuboglu states that “[our intention] is not to dismiss Europe, not to distance ourselves from Europe but to mingle it with us” (Eyuboglu 1997: 75; cited in Yener 2006: 58). I think these statements do not exclude each other; rather, they emphasise the ambiguous approach of the Humanist Anatolianists towards the ‘East-West’ dichotomy and its crucial role in Turkish modernisation. On the whole, the ‘Anatolian identity’ they constructed is ahistorical²³ (Copeaux 2006: 360-1) and it presupposes an unchanging Anatolian essence (Belge 2006b: 284).

As I mentioned above, there are limitations of the ‘Anatolian identity’. The exclusion of some civilisations is one of them and the other is the hierarchy between the civilisations. Karacasu argues that although Halikarnas Balıkcısı seems to embrace ‘all’ the peoples having lived in Anatolia, he cannot withhold himself from attributing a special importance to the existence of ‘Turks’ (Karacasu 2006: 339): “Anatolia remained independent for seven hundred years after Turks came there; before that its independence lasted for two hundred years at most” (Balıkcı: 1995: 147). In fact, the title of this article I cited is quite revealing: “Turks Saved the Western World from Destruction Twice” (Balıkcı 1995: 147-152).

²² It is important to note that this is not merely a discursive exclusion; rather, during and after the First World War, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were exposed to exclusion by means of violence on ethnic grounds.

²³ Copeaux argues that although Anatolianists mentioned the names of various historical figures such as Homer and Saint Paul as the representative of the ‘Anatolian identity’, it is not conceivable that these figures perceived themselves as such since no socio-political community were founded on the basis of an Anatolian ‘identity’ until the foundation of Turkish Republic. One exception could be Anatolian Seljuk Empire (Copeaux 2006: 364). What relates these historical figures and different civilisations, according to the Humanist Anatolianists, is the virtue of land (Copeaux 2006: 354)

Another example regarding the hierarchical relations between civilisations within the ‘all-embracing’ Anatolian identity is how Greeks are represented in the novels written by Halikarnas Balikcisi. Herkul Millas argues that in these novels Greeks are depicted positively as long as they acknowledge the superiority of the Turks (Millas 2000: 149). He contends that a dichotomy between Anatolia and ‘the West’ can be observed in the novels: most Westerners are depicted as negative characters by nature (Millas 2000). That is why Millas is not convinced of Balikci’s humanism. In fact, Millas is not the only scholar who questions the extent of his humanist approach. For instance Belge, in his analysis of two novels written by Balikci – *Uluc Reis* (1962) and *Turgut Reis* (1966) – argues that both novels, which take place in 16th century Ottoman Empire, include a great many “xenophobic and racist” descriptions of Westerners (Belge 2006c)²⁴.

Finally, I would like to provide some insight into the ‘controversial’ figure of Halikarnas Balikcisi who began life as Cevat Sakir Kabaagacli. This bibliographical account could be relevant in the sense that it may account for his obsession with the role of the father in the novel although I argue that there are wider political implications of it. Cevat Sakir Kabaagacli (1890-1973) was the son of a well-to-do and eminent family. He was educated in Robert College – a most prominent private high school in Istanbul – and later in Oxford University where he studied modern history (Balikci 2007: 5). After his university education, he returned to Turkey with his wife to whom he had married abroad. Upon discovering “an inappropriate relationship” between his father and his wife, he killed his father (Belge 2006a: 276). Belge argues that Ottoman society at the time of its ‘decline’ refrained from ‘naming’ the incident as it would have been a

²⁴ Belge’s article published in 2006 initiated a discussion and a weekly magazine, *Nokta*, brought up the issue right after the publication of his article. It can be said that there has been a growing interest in the group since 2006.

huge scandal; therefore, the state suppressed it (Belge 2006a: 276). Until this incident Cevat Sakir was considered “an eccentric and a fop” (Belge, 2006a: 276). Then he started to write for newspapers and magazines, which initiated a change in his character. Due to an article he wrote in 1925, he was tried in *Istiklal Mahkemesi*²⁵ (Independence Tribunal) with the charge of ‘criticising the military’ (Belge 2006a: 276; Balikci 2007: 63). He was convicted and was sent to exile in Bodrum, where he started a ‘new life’. As part of his new life, he began to use Halikarnas Balıkcısı (Fisherman of Halicarnassus) instead of his name. Belge suggests that this was not merely a pen name but a new identity for Cevat Sakir (Belge 2006a: 277).

²⁵ Independence Tribunals were established as a measure against local or regional rebellions against ‘nationalists’ in Anatolia in 1920. These revolutionary courts dealt severely with opponents (Zurcher 1994: 159).

Chapter 3

Crises of Masculinity and its relation to the Father-Son/ State- Male Citizen Relationship

In this chapter, I will analyse the relationship between the nation-state and the male citizens reflected in the father-son relationship in the novel, *Aganta Burina Burinata*. The main theme of the novel is the tense relationship between the state and the ‘neglected’ citizen – neglected in the sense that the state does not fulfil its responsibilities towards ‘him’ which refers to a ‘crisis’ of male citizen. This tense relationship is reflected in the father-son relationship in the novel. The novel implies that ‘the contract’ between the state and (male) citizens is not working without problematising the contract itself, which reflects the Humanist Anatolianists’ political stance. In my analysis, I will first situate the novel in modern ‘Turkish’ literary traditions, in terms of the relationship between the father/state and the son/male citizen, and then explore the reasons for the tension in the relationship.

Nation-state building in Turkey went hand in hand with a desire to transform the family, especially upper and middle-class families, and the relationship especially between men (Sirman 1999). This was reflected in novels written in the late Ottoman period²⁶, in which the sultan’s loss of power was presented in familial terms in the figure of the absent father (Sirman 1999; Gurbilek 2004). In the late 19th century novels, the absent father is rendered as the metaphor for two ambiguous social phenomena. The first is the loss of cultural values and orientation in upper-class families; with the death of the father, the son either becomes a dandy, a most

²⁶ Some examples are *Intibah*, *Taassuk-I Talat ve Fitnat*, *Musahadat*, and *Felatun Bey ile Rakim Efendi*

undesirable character or his life is devastated because of overindulgence²⁷ (Parla 2002). The absent father signifies a loss of traditional social order as well as a loss of the guarantor of tradition against the ‘West’. Second, the father was a ‘hindering’ figure of authority embodied by the Ottoman sultan, who represented the ‘old regime’. Therefore, he had to be ‘dethroned’ so that men of relatively low status could enjoy equality between men as comrades in the emerging nation-state. Since modernist elites took the ‘West’ as a model for Turkish modernisation²⁸, the extent of Western influence became an important issue, hence the role of the father due to the father’s function of being the guarantor of traditional social order. Jale Parla argues that Ottoman modernists – bureaucratic elites – adhered to an ordering of normative priorities as to the relationship between Turkey and the West. Such elites advocated benefiting from Western technology and concepts of progress while maintaining Ottoman traditions and culture (Parla 2002: 19). Parla refers to one of the novelists of late Ottoman period, Ahmet Mithat, who argued that the lack of the ‘father’ could be overcome with an emphasis on cultural values, which he believed to be strong enough to sustain the well-being of the country; however, it was important to have a strong leader when the country was going through a new phase of economic, social, and political changes with which the country was not familiar (Parla 2002: 18). Ahmet Mithat’s emphasis on the need for a ‘father’ is revealing because it clearly demonstrates a point of continuity with later ‘Turkish’ nationalist literature, which also links social and economic changes to the perceived ‘crisis’ of fatherless sons, who cannot cope with social changes in the absence of an authoritative and responsible ‘father figure’. This instability to cope, as it is

²⁷ Serif Mardin has argued that early novels were predominantly concerned with two issues: one, the status of women in changing Turkish society; two, the “super-Westernisation” of upper-class men. Mardin points out the contradictory views of Ottoman authors: While they were strong supporters of Westernisation of upper-class women, they were absolutely intolerant regarding the Westernisation of upper-class men. The significance of super-Westernised male characters was that they were too keen on the material aspects of the Western civilisation, which implied, according to these authors, that they were losing touch with traditional Ottoman culture (Mardin 2007).

²⁸ See Chapter 2.

presented in literary form, is what I mean by a symbolic ‘crisis of masculinity’²⁹. At the heart of the ‘crisis’ is the fact that the father represents traditional sovereignty, which the modernist son is trying to eliminate (Sirman 1999). In the process of this elimination, ‘the woman question’ proved to be a major point distinguishing modernising ideologies from traditional ones. Feeling restricted by traditional patriarchy, modernists advocated equality of women³⁰ in the society to create themselves a discursive space – a political sphere in which to exert power (Saracgil 2005; Durakbasa 1998; Sirman 1999). Sirman argues that

Many of the [Ottoman] reformers were the first champions of women’s education, and strongly criticized practices such as slavery and arranged marriage. Critical appraisal of the early Turkish novel, as well as the authors themselves, links this preoccupation with the evils of slavery and arranged marriage to the ideas of liberty that dominated the political discourse articulated by the first novelists (Finn 1984) and finds in these novels reactions to the growing influence of Western modes of life (Kandiyoti 1988). A closer look at the way in which arranged marriage is denounced in the novels will serve to show that the concern with family arrangements expressed in these novels was aimed at criticizing a bureaucratic elite rather than reacting to Western ideas (Sirman 1999: 166).

The crisis I mentioned led to a redefinition of the father in the late Ottoman novels – e.g. *Intibah* by Namik Kemal – as less authoritative; still protective, but more like a mentor on friendly terms with his son. (Parla 2002: 54). In order to understand the significance of the ‘redefined’ but still authoritative father, we need to turn to the ‘father’ of Turkish modernisation, Mustafa Kemal³¹.

²⁹ As I explained in Chapter 1, I consider this crisis as a symbolic one in the sense that it reflects the power struggle about gaining state legitimacy in the new national milieu. It is also important to note the class dimension; the power struggle takes place between the fathers and the sons of the upper-class families both in history and in the novels.

³⁰ The issue of women’s rights was regarded as a potent symbol of Turkish modernisation. However, as Zihnioglu argues, modernising elites wanted to handle the issue within the limits they set; therefore, they suppressed any attempt which tended to be autonomous of the government (Zihnioglu 2003). A good example for the instrumentalisation of ‘woman question’ in course of mobilisation is the closing down of the Turkish Women’s Union (Turk Kadınlar Birliği) founded in 1924 by women who actively took part in the national resistance movement. “At an extraordinary congress in May 1935 it decided to disband at the request of the RPP [Republican People’s Party – the ruling party] leadership, officially because its aims (equal rights for Turkish women) had been achieved with the granting of the vote to Turkey’s women.” (Zurcher 1994: 188)

³¹ His status was consolidated when he adopted the surname – Atatürk – meaning ‘Father Turk’ or ‘the Father of the Turks’. Moreover, “a law passed in 1934 ‘forbade the use of Atatürk by anyone else. Thus, he became the *one and only* Father Turk’ (Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984: 302) (emphasis added)” (Delaney 1995: 187).

He was the perfect embodiment of the new father I have been discussing above. With the foundation of the modern state in 1923, a new phase regarding the relationship between the ruler(s) and the ruled was ushered in: a new phase shaped by a social contract between the two parties. Ayse Saracgil suggests it was a contract³² agreed on by fathers – modernising elites – on behalf of other members of the household and other fathers, and what gave them this privileged position was their connections with the state (Saracgil 2005: 302). The tension between the father and the son was resolved; at least it appeared so in the Kemalist period. What was emphasised in both political discourse and literary fiction was the relationship between the daughter and the father (Durakbasa 1998; Kandiyoti 1997). During this period, inclusion of middle and upper-class women in the public sphere was a way of exerting power by modernising elites (Kandiyoti 1997: 213). The death of Mustafa Kemal – loss of the father figure – resulted in another ‘crisis’. It is noteworthy that against Muslim customs his burial was delayed for ten years by the ruling elite. As Saracgil argues,

This attempt to immortalise Ataturk [Mustafa Kemal] cannot only be explained by the nation’s difficulty of coming to terms with the death of their great leader and move on to mourning phase. This phenomenon, first and foremost, indicates that the ruling class, deprived of their unique leader’s ‘charisma’, were unsure as to how to formulate their own terms of sovereignty. Ideological and personal conflicts among the ruling elites, resistance against secularism, and economic hardship were the main weaknesses of the new regime. By way of ‘suspending’ Ataturk’s death and thus immortalising his authority and guaranteeing the continuity of sovereignty with Inonu’s³³ leadership, Kemalists ensured that the country endured the Second World War and that Turkey made some progress in unifying with the civilised West (Saracgil 2005: 299).

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the 1940s was the period when discontent started to take on mass proportions (spreading among the peasantry). The country was undergoing substantial social,

³² The first Constitution (1921) can be regarded as the example of a social contract in the sense that men (as citizens) were integrated into the political decision-making process.

³³ Ismet Inonu was a “military hero, prime minister, and the republic’s second president [after Mustafa Kemal]” (Ahmad 1996: 9).

economic, and political changes, and identity models imposed by the modern state were openly criticised (Saracgil 2005: 314). This situation was reflected in the novels of the period with the themes of exploitation of Anatolian peasants³⁴ rebelling against an unjust system (Moran 2006; Saracgil 2005). Criticism of Kemalism reflected this conflict between the state and ‘its’ population, in ways that often translated into a conflict between the urban and the rural (Saracgil 2005: 317). Anatolian male peasants – like the father in the late Ottoman period – represented an impediment to progress and modernisation and, paradoxically, were idealised as the signifiers of the ‘values of the nation’ (Kandiyoti 1997: 213). The reaction to this situation was peasant rebellion. It was a dramatic and unsettling moment in the process of Turkish nation building, which relied on support from across the social and economic spectrum.

Aganta, Burina, Burinata (1945) falls between two literary traditions: those of the late Ottoman and post-1950 periods³⁵. One difference between the two can especially be observed in regard to the father-son relation. Early novels were dealing with the issue of the revival of the father/the state authority, so there was no conflict between the father and the son in that sense (Parla 2002: 20). Novels written after 1950 dramatised rebellion against the state. *Aganta, Burina, Burinata*, on the other hand, situates the male citizen/son in opposition to the father/state, without openly challenging the authority of the father/state. The novel implies the existence of the contract and criticises the modern state for not satisfying its obligations to the citizens while carrying out a repressive or restricting role. The period *Aganta, Burina, Burinata* is dealing with is rather ambiguous because literary critiques agree that the novel takes place in 1910s in late Ottoman period (Naci 1997; Millas 2000). In accordance with this there is reference to War of Tripoli

³⁴ As I discussed in Chapter 2.1, what I mean by ‘exploitation of Anatolian peasants’ is the issues pertaining to land.

³⁵ For detailed information about this categorisation, see Moran 2006

(1911). However, there are also several references to state institutions such as the council of muftis established in the Republican period. Similarly, there are references to Ottoman (*okka*) and Republican (*kurus, lira*) measurement units even in the same sentence (p.207). The ambiguity in historical references reflects the ambiguous approach towards modernisation.

The father and the state in parallel are regarded as restricting the life of the protagonist. Below, I analyse the function of the authority represented by both state and father, both of which concur in an attempt to produce the same effect – preventing the protagonist from setting out to sea. When the protagonist’s father learns that his son’s master (the young man is a cobbler’s apprentice) has been teaching his son a lot about sailing he decides to take him away from his apprenticeship and send him to school. Schools like this one could be found in every neighbourhood during the late Ottoman period³⁶. The school aims to teach literacy skills as well as religion to boys and girls between the ages of 5-10. The narrator is barely literate and learns some of the prayers. He improves his reading and writing later with novels about the lives of sailors. He is particularly impressed by a history book about Christophe Columbus’ discovery of America. The feelings that the book evokes in him reflect what modernisation means for the author:

One must go aboard a ship which is as small as a nutshell, steal the wind with a tiny piece of canvas with an aspiration of discovering, sailing ahead and progressing. One must ignore other’s attempts to prevent one from sailing by reason of dangers of the sea and the possibility of death. One must ignore them, set out and find new places, new worlds (p.61).

³⁶ Schools and education in general had a crucial role in the process of nation-state building. As İlhan Tekeli states, Turkey, being an emerging nation-state, needed a great many ‘educated’ people in order to make economic and political contacts with the ‘modern world’. The first step was to send students abroad and later on there was a proliferation of schools in the modern sense throughout the country (Tekeli 2007: 23). Schools were also “institutions through which the state had direct contact with its citizens”; therefore they were the ideal places where the idea of ‘being a proper citizen’ were conveyed to especially peasants (Altınay 2004: 69).

Unlike the book about Columbus, he finds what he learns at school highly irrelevant to his life and his needs: “What was I going to do with all these names of Ottoman sultans and prophets? They weren’t my peers. I couldn’t play with them,” (p.57). In addition to the uninteresting things he has to learn, he is beaten up many times by the teacher³⁷. “I thought knowledge was in the head [mind], but in the school they were stuffing the knowledge from our feet by the help of canes,” (p.56-7). However, when he complains to his father, the latter just laughs because he thinks the teacher has the right to use corporal punishment on pupils. This example indicates that the educational institution and the father who sends the narrator there try to distance him from what he really wants to learn and do and also that the father and the educational establishment are parts of ‘the same system’. In order to clarify my point, I will give another example from the novel, in which state authority and its function of regulating and controlling its citizens is described with reference to the procedure fishermen have to follow when they come back from fishing before they can actually sell the fish. According to the procedure the fishermen have to go to the port authority, have the fish weighed, and wait for everything to be registered in 4-5 record books and present papers to prove that all the fishermen on the boat are healthy. So the state carries out the function of regulating and inspecting with a detailed procedure. The protagonist mentions how exhausted they all are right after dealing with these procedures. He complains about the procedures because they delay the sailors’ rest. In the last example, the narrator finally has the chance to be a sailor on his uncle’s ship. He first needs a certificate from the port authority. The way he describes the place emphasises the restraining function of state

³⁷ Ayse Gul Altinay, in her analysis of Turkish military and citizenship, suggests that “punishment through beating in the military exists as a ‘public spectacle’ rather than being a hidden, non-corporal process. (...) Regular beating seems to be one of the major strategies through which young men are taught submission to authority” (Altinay 2004: 67). It is possible to make use of this argument in understanding the function of beating in the novel since Altinay too, draws parallelism between educational and military institutions in her analysis.

institutions. He feels he is having a nightmare while he is climbing up the dark staircase leading to the office.

“What can I say? The existence of bureaucracy was stifling the free spirit of the human being and his determination with which one was capable of achieving anything. It was as if all these rolls of paper, thick record books, pencils, and stamps enhanced in size and leant against me. I was afraid that my hopes would fall into despair because of the bureaucracy here,” (p.94).

The protagonist compares the chief officer to Poseidon, saying that the officer is deadly dull (p.95). One common point about the restrictions, whether they come from the state or the father, is that they set a barrier between the protagonist and the sea. Interestingly enough, the father dies at sea when he fails to keep him from being a sailor (p.109-110). The sea symbolically becomes liberating for the protagonist in the sense that it takes ‘the restricting element’ – his father – away from his life.

In the language of the contract, the state is supposed to provide protection for citizens to compensate for the restrictions it imposes. I will present three examples showing how the state fails to fulfil its responsibilities in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*. Failure by the Turkish Republic to carry out land reforms resulted in powerful critiques of the state’s legislative ‘impotence’. Elimination of the feudal land ownership system was a much expected promise of the Republic as ruling elites formed alliances with the rising merchant classes and landlords who had economic power, hence great influence in the rural parts of the country (Oran 1988) cited in Moran 2006: 10). “The erosion of the political alliance between the military-bureaucratic elite, the landlords, and the bourgeoisie” contributed to the poverty of the Anatolian peasants to a great extent (Ahmad 1996: 102). In *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, the state’s failure to fulfil its duties to its citizens is shown to have negative effects on relationships between people – hungry to acquire

more land. In one example, to illustrate this relationship, the protagonist is warned by his wife, a major landowner in the village, not to give away presents to a peasant because in doing so he delays taking possession of the peasant's smallholding.

"I couldn't believe what she said. 'This is how things work here then' I said to myself. We were supposed to pretend that we were friends with him and then acquire his land behind his back. I couldn't do that, not in a million years," (p.171).

With this example the author wants to make a point that land ownership in this system destroys both the heat of (economic) life and fraternity among men and also that women stand in for capitalist greed/commercial rapaciousness and feudal backwardness. The peasants in the village are described as "living dead" many times:

The peasants looked lifeless and joyless just like oxen ploughing under the torrid sun. The reason for their state is that they cannot set their heart on their work because they are just sharecroppers; they do not own the land. Perhaps they had hope when they were young, but after they had become dependent on land, all their hopes perished (p.192).

In another example, the mayor of the town refuses to fund a girl's funeral on the grounds that her father, a fisherman, earns a lot of money very easily. He says "The girl's father gets fish from the sea just like getting bucks of water" (p.80). Just before this incident the protagonist describes the extreme labour involved in fishing, and how, being heavily dependent on weather conditions, there is always the possibility that the hard work will produce no, or very little results. Not being able to get any help from the representative of the state, the mother of the dead child has to ask the other sailors for help with the funeral. The inability of the state to modernise – to provide citizens with the means to die as well as live – is further illustrated with examples of bad (state) health services especially in rural areas (Kandiyoti 1997: 214). Death takes on a symbolic

meaning which indicates the inadequacy of the state; one cannot even afford to die in the ‘new’ Turkey. As a result of insufficient health service in the town, a child dies (p.34) and a man becomes crippled (p.50-51). These examples are clearly the reflection of the gap between what the state provides for its rural citizens and what the citizens actually need.

Similarly, the father of the protagonist fails to fulfil his responsibility³⁸ when his own brother is killed on the ship during sailing. And he is not the only father whose family suffers because he fails to protect them. The protagonist’s childhood friend, Fatma, helps her father with fishing mainly because his eyes are getting worse and his body is weakening as well. His physical condition implies that he is in no state to provide protection for his daughter; on the contrary, he is in need of care and help. The marshlands where they go fishing belong to a landowner who wants to marry Fatma, but he is rejected. To get revenge, he shoots her while she is fishing with her father and causes permanent damage to her face. Upon this incident Fatma’s father becomes wretched and senile. In terms of failure it is possible to talk about continuity between the protagonist and his father. The last incident is described as the protagonist’s failure because he says “If I had been there, instead of being at sea, nothing would have happened to her” (p.160). He tries to put things right; he wants to marry Fatma ‘despite her face’, but she disappears. Later he marries the daughter of a landowner and he gives up sailing. In his ‘new life’ he tries to interfere with the power relation between the sharecroppers and landowners: he decides not to collect a share from one sharecropper, seeing that they cannot survive if he does, but his wife reacts to that very negatively and she decides not to send him to gather shares after that incident. The son’s inability to change the system he is not content with illustrates the failures of the

³⁸ The protagonist’s father forgets to tie a rope properly. As a result, a part of the ship is broken and it hits his brother on the head causing his death

father(s) and the son as models of unstable manhood, or masculine crises. These ‘failed’ male characters mirror the inability of the state to take care of its citizens.

In terms of how the son/male citizen reacts to the authority of the father/the state, it can be said that there is no overt challenge; rather, ‘circumventing’ authority is a way of dealing with the repressive authority of the state. For instance, the protagonist skips school and gets caught. His father tells him to go back to school, but he goes to the fishing boat. He goes fishing with the fishermen a few times without telling his father. This kind of resistance requires strong fraternal forms of collaboration. Kandiyoti, in her sociological research, points out that there is connection between distance from home and the tendency among men to seek male bonding and acceptance (outside home) (Kandiyoti 1997: 195). Likewise, the protagonist cooperates with other sailors to be able to sail and fishermen allow him aboard although they know that his father has not given permission. Moreover, the protagonist’s master, the cobbler, teaches him many things about sailing despite the fact that the father sends his son there to keep him away from the sea. Finally, when his father is away at sea, the protagonist convinces his mother and his uncle to allow him to start working as a sailor. The same male bonding provides empowerment to some extent against the state and helps them survive. When the mayor refuses to fund the funeral of the girl, her mother asks sailors for help and they spend all their money on arranging the funeral.

In conclusion, the socioeconomic problems in Turkey in the 1940s combined with the negligence of the state towards Anatolia are reflected as a tense relation between the male citizen and the state, overlapping with (coexisting with) a crisis of masculinity. In terms of the position of the novel in literary tradition, there is a significant continuity between the early novels and the ones written by the Humanist Anatolianists regarding the epistemological basis of the novels, which is

based on an a priori, universalistic, absolutistic understanding of the world (Parla 2002: 63). The Humanist Anatolianists share the same basis because their ideology includes humanism presupposing a human essence and also because they extend this presupposition to an Anatolian essence (Belge 2006b: 284). I think this explains why the novel is more a criticism of why the contract is not working rather than a questioning of the contract itself.

Chapter 4

Crises of Masculinity and a Critique of Turkish Modernisation

In this chapter, I will analyse representations of (mainly) male bodies in *Aganta Burina Burinata* and the social critiques these representations contain. The 1940s was a period when Turkey was undergoing economic, social, and political change on a considerable scale. Gender relations were affected by such changes among many other things. Here in this chapter, I will focus on ‘the anxiety or the crisis of masculinity’ and how ‘ideal manhood’ is redefined in order to cope with this crisis, which can be traced in the life of a young sailor, the protagonist. The novel mainly deals with the tension between modernity and the man/nature relationship through representations of male bodies and codes of clothing. There is a tension between modernisation and masculinity in the novel. Modernity is represented through urban space and the equivalent of the modern workplace in the novel – the passenger ship.

In *Aganta, Burina, Burinata*, masculine anxiety is related to urban space which has a close connection with modernisation through the industrial city – a signifier of Western-styled modernisation. In the Turkish case, urban space took on a social meaning rather than an economic one. Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu refers to the “sanitized, controllable, and homogenous urban vision of the republic’s early leaders” (Nalbantoglu 1997: 192). The new capital city, Ankara, situated at the heart of Anatolia was seen as the ideal space to represent the republic because it would “symbolize the breakaway from the old which would demonstrate ... what can be done in a hitherto backward Turkey” (Kezer 1994; cited in Migdal 1997: 254-5). Istanbul, on the other hand, stood for the opposite of this ideal. Being the cosmopolitan capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul had quite a large population consisting of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. One

last connection is significant in order for me to substantiate my analysis in this chapter, which is the relation between ‘the West’ and sensuality. Especially in the novels written in the late Ottoman period, ‘the gravest danger’ was perceived to be sensuality ‘coming from the West’ (Parla 2002). Europe was frequently depicted as a seductive *femme fatale*.

The protagonist’s unrealised sexual experience reveals a connection with degradation and the urban space. In a chapter entitled “adolescence”, the protagonist and his friend working on the same sailing ship discovering the arousal of their sexual desires. However, what they are longing for is not referred to as such at first; rather, they say they are in need of love. Their problem is that they cannot articulate it since they feel ashamed to do so. They compare themselves with another sailor, Ahmet, who “can talk with women unashamedly and suggested shameful things to them” (p.128) and they come to the conclusion that his confident way of communicating with women is due to his lack of love and being shameless. Hence, their desire is associated with a sublime feeling ‘freed from’ bodily connotations. Only later the protagonist starts “dreaming about beautiful women who offer themselves” (p.131) and he starts saving money to go to one of the “weird places in cities” (p.132) whose locations he learns from the other sailors such as Ahmet. Paradoxically, Ahmet and other sailors “are not bad men. They *even* feel respect for prostitutes,” (p.132). And the reason they go to ‘these places’ is that they have nowhere else to go because they are poor and lonely. Therefore, although Ahmet’s function is to set the negative example against the proper attitude towards sexuality, the change in the tone is obviously supposed to show the importance of maintaining male-bonding. The protagonist finally arrives in Istanbul and heads to the streets where the brothels are, but seeing women with make-up (“their faces ‘painted’ black, red and white”) makes him feel nauseated and he “escapes” (p.133). Getting drunk, he summons up the courage to try again. His description of the streets on his way to brothels serves to vilify the

urban space by associating it with improper sexuality. The bodily connotations of the description to express degradation are quite striking. Streets smelling of urine are very narrow and do not let any light in. The windows of the houses on both sides of the streets are like diseased eyes out of which pus oozes. He also hears women laughing inappropriately and singing which sounds more like screaming. What he sees is enough to derange state of mind – he feels nauseated again. He hesitates before entering a brothel; he walks around the area trembling. But the reason for his nervousness is not ‘performance anxiety’. It is because he cannot help thinking he is about to do something dishonourable. Then he encourages himself by thinking “That the women working in those houses are dishonourable does not mean that men going there are dishonourable, too. All the men going there are surely honourable,” (p.133-4). He walks behind three tough-looking men going in the same direction, which can be perceived as an act of collaboration between men, though one party is unaware of this ‘solidarity’. He knocks at the door of one of the houses and a prostitute, an old square-built woman with one eye bulging out, opens the door for him. And this is not just any female body; it is the body of a Greek woman, which I think serves to illustrate another level of alienation. Despite being shocked, he enters the house to show that he is not scared, but after a while he finds himself outside feeling upside down because of repulsion, excitement, and shock. This most probably means he did not have sex because obviously he was in the ‘wrong place’. Indeed, right after this incident he yearns to go back his hometown. The city is clearly associated with ‘improper sexuality’, but it is not even represented as indulgence; it is simply repulsive and, very typically, the social criticism is carried out through a female body, depicted as repulsively as possible.

Capitalistic structures of work and modern discipline, other signifiers of ‘modernity’, are further sources of anxiety that are dealt with in the novel. After his experience in the city, the protagonist

wants to go back to his hometown; however, he has to work on a foreign vessel. This passenger ship is the space where the discipline of modernity is portrayed and criticised. As Foucault suggests that the distribution of bodies – docile bodies – in the space and regulation of working time are two aspects of modern discipline among others (Foucault 1975) and these two aspects constitute a fundamental difference between the sailing ship and the passenger ship. In his account of Bengali nationalist critiques of Western modernity Dipesh Chakrabarty (in “Family, Fraternity, and Salaried Labour”)³⁹ points to the direct relation perceived between capitalism and colonialism. Hence, the denigration of capitalist discipline went hand in hand with the denigration of colonial rule (Chakrabarty 2000). Similarly, it is possible to talk about an overlap between criticism in the novel of capitalist discipline and of Western modernisation taken as the model for Turkish modernisation⁴⁰. That the ship is a foreign vessel provides a proof for this argument. In terms of the distribution of bodies, passengers and crew have separate spaces on the ship; the first class deck and third class deck are allocated on a class basis. While there are comfortable deck chairs for the passengers on first class deck, “The third class deck is too small and crowded. It is not even possible for one to turn around oneself,” (p.137). Bodies in the third-class deck are physically constrained even in the place allocated for them. Also significant in the description of the third deck is that it is not possible to see the sea. In fact, the whole structure of the ship sets a barrier between the protagonist and the sea – man and nature. For instance, before going aboard, the board of the ship seems like a “black wall” in front of the sailors and there are dark and dingy bunkers and passageways wherever the protagonist goes. In addition to these, waiters can only use a specific passageway and there is a certain point where the protagonist and his friend, one of the

³⁹ In his analysis, Chakrabarty demonstrates that Western notions of modernization such as family, fraternity, and autonomous individuals are “both indispensable and inadequate in representing [the Bengali case as] a non-European modernity” (Chakrabarty 2000: 19).

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2.

waiters, can observe the dining hall without being seen. The places where they work are compartmentalised and they cannot come into contact with each other while working; only when they are off duty can they meet in the kitchen. Furthermore, they are constrained by a timetable as well as by the division of space. They come together in the kitchen and chat, but they cannot completely offload their minds to each other because their shifts start and they have to part.: “We talked about our hometown. I praised Fatma and he praised Marika, but neither of us could go as deep as we wished because he had to serve and I had to go back to the furnace” (p.139). Even the passengers’ life aboard is regulated although it does not have the same meaning for them as for the crew: a bell rings to indicate the time for the passengers to get prepared for dinner. How the work is organised is described as restrictive and completely dissatisfying. Furthermore, it is possible to trace the negative effects of the protagonist’s job inflicted on his body due to being a stoker: “I burnt my legs and feet many times with pieces of hot coal while feeding the furnace and because I went out to cool off a bit I got cold and started to cough rather badly” (p.141). In addition to the physical and one might say psychological damages, he describes his position as extremely degrading, which points out the difference between ‘where he belongs’ and where he is.

The representation of the passenger ship also bears gendered inscriptions of modernisation. Two points about the ship company – that it is Australian and its office is in Istanbul – are combined with the modern disciplinary system applied on the ship and so three different aspects related with modernisation – the city, Westernisation, and discipline – are criticised in one single example⁴¹. The criticism is carried out through examples of some male characters on the ship and in the company that owns the ship. As representatives of an ‘improper masculinity’, the officers are

⁴¹ However, this is not a coherent criticism of modernisation as a whole; it is rather ambiguous. Modernisation evokes anxiety for the Humanist Anatolianists basically because they share the ideals of this project with modernising Kemalists.

depicted as dandies, a recurring character in the modern Turkish novel⁴², with their ‘fantasy socks’ they show off and their painstaking attempts to keep their well-ironed trousers tidy. Although it is a brief description, its sarcastic tone reminds the readers of the connection between modernisation, Western influence as a threat against traditions and the symbol of that threat – the dandy. The second group of improper male ‘characters’ – male passengers – go aboard swaggeringly and this manner, with its connotation of the dandy, is an apparent criticism of their upper-class and Western origins. Connell has argued that “to be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world” (Connell 1983: 19; cited in Scott and Morgan 1996: 72), but the following description of passengers on the first class deck implies that they do not conform to the ‘ideal masculine standards’: “Shadows on the deck appeared on the surface from the places they were hidden, and then withdrew into their hiding places as if they were terrified of their courage,” (p.137). Male passengers are not referred to as human beings but as ‘shadows’, and the lack of bravery attached to the description suggests that even mere existence is a matter of courage for a man. Similarly, the waiters serving these passengers are “not like human beings but like ghosts moving around” (p.140). Even though the waiters do not obviously belong to the same class as the passengers, the protagonist’s description still deprives them of ‘flesh and blood’ most probably because of the gloves they are wearing while serving food. Clothing is again a metaphor through which criticism is carried out. “The nature of uniform is, among other things, to divert attention from the particularities and idiosyncrasies of specified bodies and to focus on generalised public roles and statuses. The disciplining of a body of men is at the expense of individual bodies,” (Morgan 1996: 72). Waiters’ uniforms which make them look like admirals with the shoulder straps embroidered with goldthread are the clear signification of the discipline imposed on bodies. Women’s bodies also get their share of criticism as ‘upper-

⁴² See Chapter 3, footnote 1.

class bodies'⁴³. Generally speaking they are allocated with a consuming function in the conventional division of labour: their expensive clothes, make-up and the cream they put on their faces become the subject of criticism of Western women. In this narrative, make-up and expensive clothes are metaphors for prostitution and are embedded in an 'East and West' dichotomy, whereby moral values are attributed only to 'the East', positioning 'the West' on the side of 'unchasteness'. Moreover, because of how they walk – the 'inviting' way they move their hips while walking – their bodies once again symbolise 'immorality'. What is emphasised here is the male gaze of a peasant who stands together with other fatherless sons against seductive Western women. However, there is another dimension of this case and that is the protagonist's class. Such women are immorally inviting because he should not and cannot approach them. Besides sexuality, the other approach to Western women is related to age. Two of them in particular are in turn described as an "old wizened pile of flesh", lacking human qualities (p.138). The protagonist further dehumanises the passengers when he defines what his job involves: "We would carry passengers. The passengers made-up in Paris were given to us. And we would carry them into luxurious cabins as if they were sacks full of straw and would take them from one place to the other," (p.142). The way the protagonist describes the passengers can be considered as a way he expresses his resistance against the disciplinary system.

As mentioned above, the passenger ship stands for a barrier between man and nature. What is celebrated in place of this is an unmediated relationship that exists in rural areas. One particular incident witnessed by the protagonist criticises modern education for interfering with this intimate relationship. An elementary school teacher takes his students and brings them to the village to

⁴³ Alan Sinfield adds another dimension to "hostility towards the upper-classes" (they were called 'silk-gloved aristocrats'), which is "upper-class determination to assert 'law and order' (Sinfield 1992: 264). This dimension reinforces the link between a disciplinary system of work and the upper-class as the initiator of this system.

help the peasants improve their techniques of agricultural production. Convinced that the peasant he is talking to is completely ignorant, he asks him superciliously if he uses a thermometer to understand whether the soil has reached the right temperature to plant seeds. Learning that the peasant does not know about the device, the teacher initiates a ‘teaching session’ for the peasant. The representation of this ‘teaching session’ satirises modern education and its relation to the world ‘outside’. “Some of the kids – apparently the most hardworking ones – explained what a thermometer was and how it was used as if they were recapping what they had learnt at school, screaming at the top of their voices,” (p.167). The way knowledge is conveyed indicates that modern education, a substantial element in modernisation, imposes knowledge without questioning the relevance of that piece of knowledge for the lives of the masses. The example points out the impossibility of communication between the state and the people it is ‘trying to modernise’. One of the principles of modern education is ignoring the existence of any other kind of working knowledge. Despite this attempt, the novel shows that there are viable traditional ways the masses use to sustain their lives. How the peasant decides if the soil has reached the right temperature is a good example of the main theme of the novel I mentioned – the celebration of the unmediated relation between man and the nature: the peasants take out their trousers, sit on the soil with their bare bottoms, and feel the temperature. The peasant says that he also lies down on the ground and listens to the ants moving underground. He enjoys the smell and feels like eating the soil, signifying a desire to unite with nature. This close relationship enables men to define their time and their space against modernising time and space as a way of exercising raw, unmediated, masculine power.

Unlike the passenger ship – a modern working space, where only healthy bodies can be employed (the protagonist’s job requires stamina and endurance, for example) – the workshop where the

protagonist has been an apprentice for a while sets an example of an alternative working space in the sense that it brings imperfect male bodies together. The owner of the shop, an old cobbler, is crippled. He has two permanent guests who come when the shop opens and stay until closing time. One of them, an old gardener who used to grow and sell vegetables, is almost blind and his body is completely worn out; he even has the look of an old horse because when his wheel horse dies, he has to do its job since he cannot afford to buy a new horse. The other permanent guest is an old retired man who used to work as a civil servant. Since he endlessly talks about his past, people in town tend to avoid talking to him. This shop provides him with a place to socialise. Finally, the man who makes tea is also crippled. So as well as housing imperfect male bodies this is a space where activities of work and leisure are combined and coexist, an arrangement that is not likely to be acceptable within a capitalist organisation of work. This is also where the protagonist starts learning about sailing from his master during his apprenticeship, so it forms a bond between him and the sea. This relationship is significant because it indicates that, as Kimmel points out, “the firm patriarchal lineage to ground a secure sense of” manhood no longer exists. Sons can no longer “grow into secure manhood by replicating fathers” (Kimmel 1996: 45). ‘Without’ the father, the son has to find new relationships through which he can construct his manhood in a secure way. Being a member of the crew on a sailing ship is one of these relationships.

Finally, the sailing ship is represented as the ideal space for the protagonist because the relationship among men on the ship is based on fraternity⁴⁴ and it facilitates closeness to nature. The sailing ship is the complete opposite of the passenger ship in many respects. For example, there is no compartmentalisation on the sailing ship, so the distribution of bodies is not even an

⁴⁴ See Chapter 1

issue. Although one assumes a hierarchy between the captain and the crew, it is not emphasised in the novel; rather, they all work and eat together in that space on equal terms. The space is not organised according to the principles of modern discipline. Yet, this does not mean that it is a discipline-free space; the novel implies that sailing involves a great amount of discipline, but it is more to do with responsibility to others and it is also a matter of survival. Being a good sailor “is very obviously the deployment of a set of skills, which in common with all such skills, are to do with the control and deployment of the body” (Morgan 1996: 77). No wonder is it related with ‘proper’ masculinity:

I saw a small sailing ship whose deck was completely covered with water. While we were gathering way quite easily, it (she) was going through a life-and-death struggle and it was such a glorious struggle. While our passengers were eating almonds and flirting with each other on the upper deck, my sailor fellows were fighting against the sea with the innocence of their bare chests; they were fighting like lions. If only I could have joined them (p.142).

Accentuating the qualities which become apparent in nature has another implication related to the change in the modes of production. In his analysis of the Italian peplum films, Dyer contends that

in the shift away from rural labour, the value of the big strong body, and the male power that went along with it, was undermined. The peplum celebrates a type of male body for an audience to whom it had until now been a source of economic self-worth. The very emphasis on the simple display of muscle [...] [is] an affirmation of the value of strength to an audience who was finding that it no longer had such value (Dyer 1997: 169).

It is significant that the image of the ‘lion-like, bare-chested’ sailor emerges through the comparison of the passenger ship where machinery takes over and the sailing ship where it is still possible to ‘celebrate’ the deployment of the naked, masculine human body. In that sense, sailing

validates the image of the physically strong male body and the image is strengthened with the pleasures of adventure (Dyer 1997: 180).

In conclusion, the novel critiques modernisation by indicating that it distances man from the nature and so from an ideal form of masculinity. And docility which is the result of discipline in the modern sense also causes removing from the 'proper' masculinity, which is sometimes referred to as non-existence. The aspects of modern life dealt with in the novel do not leave men the space for struggle, which allows them to prove themselves. Therefore, being close to nature necessarily involves a battle between man and nature and collective camaraderie in the face of danger and uncertainty (Morgan 1996: 77). The existence of such a space and the relationship of men to that space are significant because the novel provides a redefinition of manhood to eliminate men's anxiety caused by social and political change. In that context, the emphasis on fraternity becomes very meaningful since "positive virtues of masculinity are perceived to be in fraternity and male-bonding, the direct expression of which may be in uninhibited bodily contact or a collective sharing of bodily experiences" (Morgan 1996: 86). So the response to the 'crisis of masculinity' is 'escape' to a homosocial space where fraternity is cherished in men's relationships among themselves.

Chapter 5

Escape to Nature: an attempt to reconstruct masculinity

The urge for self-control and the need for social control were easily fused in the new republic (Kimmel 1997: 50)

In chapter 3 and 4 I analysed the social, political, and economical reasons leading to ‘crises’ of male characters. A discourse of ‘crisis’ goes hand in hand with a discourse of ‘reconstruction’. In this chapter, I will analyse what the metaphors of the sea and the sailing ship in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*. I will show that the sea is depicted as an ideal space for reconstruction of masculinity. Also, I will analyse whether reaffirmation of masculinity is possible or not. In order to do so, I will explore the themes of escape, self-control, encountering ‘the other’, and the state of nature.

Kimmel argues that both escape and self-control⁴⁵ were ways of handling ‘crises of masculinity’ in several 19th century American advice books (Kimmel 1996: 43-78). Although escape and self-control seem to be two different ‘solutions’, they overlap insofar as the former is considered a way of controlling one’s environment. As Kimmel points out “the drive for control, for order, stems from experiencing the world as disordered, as out of control” (Kimmel 1996: 44). In *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, self-control is represented in relation to sexuality as suggested by Kimmel; the difference in the novel is the relation between self-control and the city. The city, namely Istanbul, is associated with ‘the West’; therefore, controlling one’s sexuality is also related to resisting the ‘West’ and its influences⁴⁶. It is important to note that Europe in general was frequently portrayed as a seductive woman in late Ottoman novels (Parla 2002). Parla

⁴⁵ In Kimmel’s analysis, self-control is a way of handling the ‘crises’ used by middle-class men. The reason the same way is adopted by a peasant is, in my view, related to the author’s middle-class background.

⁴⁶ In a ‘Western’ context, in the American travel literature, the city itself is portrayed as ‘feminising’ (Kimmel 1996: 311). Furthermore, the ‘East’ is depicted as a seductive woman in the Western context in general (Said 1979). Usage of the same depiction Turkish novel can be regarded as a ‘counter-Orientalising’ in that sense.

suggests that “for late Ottoman novelists, sensuality was regarded as an element of Western culture and it was a highly dangerous one” (Parla 2002: 79). Parla goes on to say that the ones who were thought to be particularly vulnerable to the ‘evils of the West’ were fatherless sons (Parla 2002: 79). Though being fatherless himself, the protagonist has an idealised level of virtue in regard to sexuality. As I discussed in Chapter 4, he feels the need to justify his going to the brothel so he says “all the men going there are surely honourable” (p.134). The same issue arises when he decides to quit sailing. Later he expresses his decision in those words: “So I destroyed my life in exchange for a kiss” (p.160). Succumbing to sexuality⁴⁷ distances him from ‘where he belongs’, which is either his hometown or the sea. Therefore, it is implied in the novel that self-control is necessary to refrain from the potentially ‘malign’ influences of ‘the West’.

Escape is the other suggested means of attempting to reconstruct masculinities. Both Kimmel and Leslie Fiedler contend that the reason for men to escape, in reality and in literature, is the ‘civilising constraints’ of women and marriage (Kimmel 1996, 1997; Fiedler 2003). Fiedler, in his analysis of American fiction, suggests that marriage stands for “a compromise with society, an acceptance of responsibility and drudgery and dullness” (Fiedler 2003: 338). Feeling insecure in the unstable and competitive capitalist market, middle-class American men sought to restore their ‘lost’ manhood by constructing separate spheres. Ensuring the workspace as a homosocial space was one of the ‘strategies’ of men to overcome their first crisis in 1830s America (Kimmel 1996: 15). Male bonds are usually generated under tough natural conditions as well as in workplaces defined as a “counter-family that can only flourish in a world without women” (Fiedler 2003: 352) and, in the context of the novel, without father(s) as well. Fiedler further

⁴⁷ It is important to note the difference between the depictions of sexuality in both cases. In the latter case it is legitimised through marriage, so it is not rendered as a matter of virtue rather as a wrong choice.

argues that “there is finally no heterosexual solution which the American psyche finds completely satisfactory, no imagined or real consummation between man and woman found worthy of standing in our fiction for the healing of the breach between [...] society and nature (Fiedler 2003: 339). The need to escape from women and marriage can be observed in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, too. When the protagonist decides not to keep his promise of sailing again as requested by his prospective father-in-law, it seems that he escapes from his wife and marriage. Yet, as I discussed in Chapter 3, his wife symbolises a ‘land-dependent life’ more than a domestic life, which is illustrative of the dominant socio-economic questions in modern Turkish political discourses. What is more important is the implicit involvement of his father in his choice. The protagonist quite often remembers his father’s words blessing the land and damning the sea and he agrees with his father’s view during the short period he enjoys his life on land. However, he finally leaves everything behind and this implies that, in the end, he does not come to terms with his father.

In order to avoid potentially negative connotations of ‘escape’, it is emphasised that nature is a testing ground for men – “an anxious quest to test one’s manliness” (Kimmel 2006: 311). Kimmel indicates that in order to overcome their ‘identity crises’ “men [seek] vigorous ways to demonstrate their hardy manhood” (Kimmel 2006: 309). In nature men find “a confrontation with the ‘primitive’ at the boundaries of civilization” (Kimmel 2006: 311). This ‘playing with the boundaries’ provides men with a means of asserting their manliness. In accordance with this general framework, in the novel, sailing requires some qualities such as bravery, risk-taking, and adventurousness⁴⁸. The emphasis on these qualities has a significant role in the ‘reestablishment of masculinity’. And it is probably not a coincidence that Mustafa Kemal, the symbolic father of

⁴⁸ Highlighting the same ‘male qualities’ can also be observed in the American case (Kimmel 1997: 20-22).

the nation (Durakbasa 1998: 47), was characterised as adventurous and independent (Saracgil 2005: 298). The protagonist, too, is concerned that his wanting to leave his life on land behind might be associated with fear. At the end of the novel, he sees a ship sailing when he is trying to make a decision about staying with his wife or going back to sailing.

A sailor was singing a folk song. It sounded like the life itself. All of a sudden, I thought a sailor on the ship pointed at me: 'There he is, the sailor who escapes from the sea because of fear!' I jumped from where I was sitting. I started crying my heart out. I shouted, 'Fear? Never! (p.216)

The next day he leaves his wife and sets out to sea not coming back. This can be regarded as an escape from unsatisfying societal ties, as well as from a restricting economic structure based on land ownership. It is significant that although the protagonist's father is a sailor as well, they never share any experience or knowledge related to seafaring. Instead of a filial relationship which is based on hierarchy and which evokes discontent, fraternity – or the ideal relationship of the equals – is glorified. Related to this, the sailing ship, the space where fraternity can be enjoyed, represents a utopian world in which “the tie between male and male is not only considered innocence, it is taken for the symbol of innocence itself, for it's imagined as the only institutional bond in a paradisaal world” (Fiedler 2003: 350). And the sea becomes the symbol of the barrier between this imagined paradise and the ‘deadening land’⁴⁹. The sea is portrayed as the perfect place to facilitate this ‘special bond’ because “to be at sea is not knowing what to do”, as in the English pun, which gives some insight into understanding the context of the novel. Morgan argues that being close to nature necessarily involves a battle between man and nature and collective camaraderie in the face of danger and uncertainty (Morgan 1996: 77). What is significant in the novel is that camaraderie, at times expanding to wives and children of fellow

⁴⁹ Fiedler observes that in the American fiction “the masculine paradise is laved by great rivers or the vast ocean” (Fiedler 2003: 357).

sailors, continues even on land⁵⁰; in fact it has to continue due to the lack of care from ‘the father state’.

In the novel, sailing is portrayed as the means of becoming a man; the ship becomes the place where a symbolic transition of the protagonist from boyhood to manhood takes place. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the protagonist either has or comes close to have his first sexual experience in a brothel in the city. In any case, what he experiences there is not a confidence-evoking transition-to-manhood incident. He wants to retrieve to his confined and secure world after the incident; in other words, he wants to escape. Saracgil’s following statement indicates that a ‘painful start’ to sexual life for men was not specific to *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*:

In the traditional system, complete sexual satisfaction for men was guaranteed by institutions such as polygamy and concubinage. In the new era [republican era] these were replaced by sterile relationships of money-oriented love. Starting with 1940s novels increasingly dealt with young men who had a traumatic start to their sexual life by queuing at the doors of brothels (Saracgil 2005: 293).

Furthermore, it is significant that no other ‘conventional rituals’ of transition to manhood such as a circumcision ceremony takes place in the novel. This lack points out that construction of a stable manhood is not possible for the protagonist, at least not until he becomes a sailor. The way the protagonist describes the sea on the first day of his sailing proves this point: “At the break of the day, the cool wind dispersed the mist as if it opened the veil of a bride. When I saw the bride, the naked sea, I said to her ‘You will be mine today’” (p.98). On his first night at sea he hardly gets a wink of sleep because of excitement. Kimmel defines transition to manhood as a transformation into the “refined self-assertion and purposeful self-discipline of manhood” (Kimmel 1996: 55) and what facilitates this in the novel is sailing.

⁵⁰ For an example of sailors’ collaboration, see Chapter 3

It can be observed that there is an idealisation of being a sailor and going back to nature. One particular description of a sailor in the novel indicates a point of culmination of this idealisation:

His face looked like anything but a human being's because of his sufferings during the storms and at sea in general. His body lying on the ground under a tree as if it was crucified looked like the dead body of the child lying inside the house (p.81).

The significance of the non-Muslim reference can be grasped by Dyer's argument. He contends that "though infrequent, the recourse to crucifixion can be a key moment in establishing the moral superiority of not specifically Christian characters" (Dyer 1997: 150). Apart from the moral superiority of individuals on the ship, the glorification of life at sea is the means by which a relationship between sailors is constructed. It can be described as "male companionship [...] without the threat of the combat of honor" (Fiedler 2003: 353). There is no place for rivalry or inequality on the ship unlike on land where people "pretend that they are friends, but in fact they are plotting harm for each other" (p. 171). It can be argued that the ship represents the microcosm of the society as it should be. After all, "modern masculinity was closely tied to fears and hopes of modern society" (Mosse 1996: 4). The ideal society is imagined to be based on a strong collectivity. That is why camaraderie in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata* is different from the novels Fiedler analyses in the sense that the former does not deal with a close male friendship between two men of different 'races'. Interracial friendships have a particular function in American fiction. They "stand for the healing of the social conflicts which most irk us, and before which we feel most powerless and baffled" (Fiedler 2003: 366). However, in the novel I am analysing, the author does not focus on a friendship between two men; rather he depicts a close relationship which every member of the crew is a part of. Herkul Millas observes that in

Aganta, Burina, Burinata there is not even one Greek or Christian sailor who works with Turks on sailing ships (Millas 2000: 127). Even though it is acknowledged that Greeks and Turks live together in the Aegean seaside town, Bodrum, where the novel takes place, Greeks are completely invisible within the borders of Bodrum. There are only two Greeks in the novel: one, the prostitute in Istanbul and two, the sailor with whom the protagonist works on the passenger ship⁵¹. A Greek (sailor) is “like a brother” (p.140) only in a ‘truly’ foreign context. The sailing ship represents a space which is free from a multi-ethnic structure. Both Greek characters are associated with cosmopolitan spaces, which seem to be unsuitable for imagining a collectivity in the Humanist Anatolianists worldview. Kimmel points out to the significance of such a collectivity in relation to the ‘crisis of masculinity’:

By re-establishing the early nineteenth-century separation of spheres between women and men and by excluding from full manhood the ‘other men – men of color, gay men, non-native-born men – these men cling to the belief that a secure and confident gender identity is possible (Kimmel 1996: 309).

As Morgan suggests collectivity is a direct expression of positive virtues of masculinity discovered in fraternity and male bonding (Morgan 1996: 86). In the case of the novel, collective identity is imagined by excluding certain elements such as Greeks, women or ‘the father’ and it can be argued that this seems to be the general strategy which is used in the construction of an ‘Anatolian identity’ as I discussed in Chapter 2.2.

Finally I would like to discuss ‘the ideal space’ which is believed to facilitate the collective identity. In the novel, sailing can be said to represent the state of nature; however, there are some limitations of this analogy. It is not possible to maintain the argument when the state of nature is

⁵¹ For the two characters see Chapter 4.

defined as a condition in which freedom is insecure (Pateman 1998: 40). Neither does the analogy work when it is perceived as a lack of social order. The analogy is possible insofar as the ship provides a space that is somewhat distant from the controlling mechanisms of the state. The sea and sailing offer a means of escape but the question is whether it is a viable means. I argue that it is not since it is contained within the borders. The protagonist pretends that he escapes, but he is still within the limits of 'Turkish sovereignty'. The sailing ship gives a sense of freedom since it does not have to follow a route like the passenger ship whose route is designated in advance in accordance with demand in capitalistic sense. However, on a very basic level, the ship has to go back; therefore, the sea cannot provide a permanent space to imagine the desired collectivity or, related to this, it cannot restore 'lost manhood'. So in that sense reconstruction of masculinity is not possible. As for the relation between the sea and collective identity, the sea can be regarded as a liminal space in the sense that it implies 'flirting with' the borders and encountering the 'other'. However, encountering the 'other' while sailing is not addressed at all in the novel. The seaside town where the story takes place is very close to many Greek islands. Although in a later novel by the same author⁵² these islands are mentioned, in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata* they are completely 'invisible' to the characters in the novel. It can be argued that the social, political, and economic changes Turkey was undergoing in the 1940s led to the need for a reaffirmation of national identity and this necessitated the exclusion of Greek territory and characters.

In conclusion, Mosse argues that "living a virtuous life and maintaining self-control at all times were part of true manliness, but a strong sense of liberty, a commitment to freedom, was for him [for modern man] an equally important ingredient" (Mosse 1996: 7). In the case of *Aganta*,

⁵² Turgut Reis written in 1966 (Bilgi Yayinevi)

Burina, Burinata taking place in 1940s Turkey, the emphasis on virtue, self-control, and liberty is particularly important since these qualities represent an ‘alternative’ to the constraints of familial ties and the state.

Conclusions

In this research, I analysed *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, a novel written by Halikarnas Balıkcısı – a member of a literary group called the Humanist Anatolianists – in 1945. This analysis involved a considerable degree of historicisation of the novel, paying particular attention to the social, political, and economic changes Turkey was undergoing in the 1940s. The reason I focused on this particular period is that it enabled me to grasp some of the complexities of Turkish modernisation in the post-Kemalist period (1940-1950) and the intricacies of the construction of modern masculine identities in relation to this period, both of which were conveyed through literary representations.

The 1940s was a period in which strong criticism against the Kemalist ruling started to emerge on a wide scale, especially among the peasant masses in Anatolia, channelled into open critiques of the republican regime by (predominantly male) novelist voices. There were various reasons for this criticism to be expressed quite openly. The first reason was the economic difficulties the country had to endure – especially during the Second World War. Under these circumstances, the Kemalist ruling began to implement harsh measures, which evoked anything but sympathy in a population that were mainly passive recipients of the modernisation project. The second reason was that the Kemalist understanding of secularism, which involved withdrawing religious representations from public space, had an alienating effect on the masses for whom Islam had long been the primary source of identity. In addition to this, the homogenisation of people on the basis of the Turkish ethnic identity, which was considered to be an ‘inevitable’ element of the nation building process, led people to a difficulty in identifying with ‘national identity’. Thirdly, the alliances between the bureaucracy and the landlords established during the process of nation-

state building contributed to the poverty of the Anatolian peasants, which aroused a significant amount of discontent towards the ruling party.

In the context of these changes, the Humanist Anatolianists have proved to be a revealing case in order to understand the ambiguous reactions against modernisation. The group has a somewhat unique approach vis-à-vis the 'tense' relation between the 'the West' against which Turkish modernisation defines itself and the nation state's concern to avoid a possible 'excessive Western influence', seen to be crucial in retaining the 'essence' of the nation. The Humanist Anatolianists' approach to this dichotomy is to neglect or to eliminate it through an 'Anatolian identity' which is ahistorical and essentialist.

In my analysis of *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata*, I reached the conclusion that the Humanist Anatolianists' ambiguous approach to modernisation is reflected through the 'crises' of male characters, which have strong political implications for reading anxieties surrounding the relationship between male citizen and modern state. I argued that negligence of the state towards 'its' rural citizens in the novel can be understood in terms of a social contract upon which nation state is considered to be established. In this reading, the modern state is perceived to restrict 'its' citizens; however, it does not provide them with 'protection' as a compensation for the restrictions that it imposes. The perception of 'crises' – both in relation to economic and patriarchal order – requires that masculinity undergo 'reconstruction'; the sea and sailing are the key metaphors in the novel for creating an ideal space where 'reconstruction' can be carried out through an 'escape to nature'. I also found out that in *Aganta*, *Burina*, *Burinata* the male body becomes a site through which critiques of modernisation are carried out. Women bodies are usually considered to be signifiers of the boundaries of modern nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1989

and 1997), which is an indication of the stability of patriarchal authority in the nation-state. I have worked on the assumption that male bodies are also signifiers of the nation-state; in contrast to women's bodies, it is male bodies in the novel which imply the instability of patriarchal authority. In the case of Turkish modernisation, the ambiguity of the historical context, reflected through historical references both to the Republic and the Ottoman Empire, mirrors the ambiguity of a patriarchy that lies 'between' the classic patriarchal empire and the modern nationalist fraternity. More focus on masculinity in nation building projects in further studies could reveal instability in other contexts as well.

Appendix

Synopsis of Aganta, Burina, Burinata

The story takes place in the late Ottoman period, early 20th century, in an Aegean seaside town, Bodrum. The protagonist, the only child of his family, wants to be a sailor even though his father, also a sailor, does not give consent. The father tries to prevent his son from sailing by first sending him to a workshop where he works as an apprentice for a while. In the workshop, the protagonist is introduced with knowledge about seafaring by his master. Realising that apprenticeship does not keep the protagonist away from the sea, his father sends him to school. However, the protagonist is never satisfied with what he learns at school, neither is he content with the way he is treated there. His only friend at school is a girl, 'Tomboy' Fatma whose father is a fisherman. With the help of Fatma, the protagonist sails for the first time in his life with Fatma's father. The second time he goes fishing with Fatma's father, the protagonist decides to quit school and he starts working as a sailor while his father is away at sea. His father dies when the protagonist is at sea. Shortly after his mother dies, too. He comes back to his hometown wishing to marry Fatma. However, he learns that Fatma has been shot and her face has been damaged. Despite the damage, the protagonist wants to marry her, but Fatma does not want to 'ruin his life', so she disappears. The protagonist marries the daughter of a landowner. He gives up sailing as it is his father-in-law's wish. However, he cannot be happy with his life on land. At the end he decides to leave everything behind and to start sailing again.

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