WITNESSING TORTURE: TWO TURKISH NOVELS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1971 COUP D'ETAT

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Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to offer a new interpretation of the literary representation of the unprecedently violent events brought about by the March 12 (1971) coup d'état in Turkey through two novels analyzed from the perspective of trauma, testimony, and narration. The 1971 coup encouraged many novelists to produce literary testimonials, which as a whole later began to be called *March 12 literature*. Even though this was the second military intervention in the history of Turkey, it differed from the first in that it led to the systematization of torture. By the same token, it also differed from the third military coup in 1980: Although the violence of this latter resulted in the definitive emasculation of an effective socialist politics, the March 12 coup *introduced* this violence, making it *an event without a referent*. The experience of torture and other kinds of violence, specifically the physical annihilation of the young leaders of the emergent guerilla groups, thus overflowed the usual perception of the literary left. As the main subject of these testimonials consequently resisted representation, the testimonial literature of the period often centered around characters with shattered individualities, either by the experience of torture or by their traumatic memories and the accompanying sense of guilt. In accordance with the idea that individual trauma becomes collective trauma through representation, the case novels analyzed in this thesis illustrate not only how the literary left of the period assumed a self-lacerating conscience in guise of self-criticism, but also how the unrepresentable essence of their subject distorted the narration in these literary testimonials.

Table of Contents

Introduction

During the writing process of the present thesis, I had an internship at a human rights organization in İstanbul that seeks to establish the grounds for transitional justice and coming to terms with the state sponsored violence in Turkey. While having a small talk over a coffee with the co-director of the organization, I mentioned him Marc Nichanian's argument that historical catastrophes could be represented only through literature. His answer was moving to me, both intellectually and emotionally: "Yes," he said in an eye-catchingly ruminative manner, "his theory invalidates all our effort here." A zealous defender of human rights for the past twenty-five years, he had spent most of his life in finding and creating ways to represent historical traumas in the public sphere, leading him up to found the institution that is one of the most effective in this task. Yet still, he noticeably, and very impressively, was quite convinced about literature's singular capability to represent past atrocities – a conviction that also compelled the writing of the present thesis.

This thesis is about the literary representation of torture in Turkish literature, focusing on two case examples. Torture became a systematized and widely practiced way of gaining information with the second military coup on March 12, 1971; unnerving the socialist groups and shattering the individualities of their members. Turkey is in fact one of those countries where military coup is a tradition. Between 1960 and 1997, there were four military coups, all of which had a different background and thus produced its specific kind of literature. However, when one talks about "military coup" and "literature" in a single sentence, one is immediately reminded of the novels that were produced right after the second military coup in 1971, and later began to be called *March 12 literature*. The answers to the question why this coup and not others generated its own specific "genre" are numerous. In a nutshell, however, one fundamental reason is the unprecedented mass scale of state violence. In fact, the third coup in 1980 was much more violent and led to the definitive liquidation of socialist politics in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the 1971 coup was the event that *introduced* this violence, especially by systematizing torture. As the socialist intellectual circles were in close relationship with the army and its Kemalist principles, they initially thought that it was the revolutionary clique within the army which had taken power, and thus defended the legitimacy of the intervention. However, they soon realized that the main purpose of the intervention was both to annihilate the illegal leftist guerilla forces (as a result of the growing chaos) and to suppress the legal leftist organizations. With the 1971 coup, the fundamental rights granted by the 1961 constitution were rescinded, and those who were suspected of socialist or radical activities were immediately arrested, imprisoned, and at times tortured or even sent to gallows.

Three Military Coups

The first military coup which took place on May 27, 1960, mainly emanated from the army's distress with the Democrat Party [DP] policies which did not obey Kemalist values, especially that of secularism. When DP was elected in 1950 and forced People's Republican Party [CHP-the party founded by Mustafa Kemal] into opposition, the army was divided into two groups: those who accepted the Democrat Party rule, and those who distrusted it. Similarly, the DP regime was opposed to by the majority of the intellectuals, while it was favoured by the peasants. The army's general conviction was that the DP government abused the army as a tool for its repressive policies. When Democrats attempted to use the army to repress CHP, it was the last line to be crossed: the principle of neutrality was overstepped. When the government was overthrown, it was welcomed and celebrated by the secularist and socialist sectors of the society.

The most important outcome of this first military intervention was the amendment of the constitution which, in its new form, permitted the foundation of leftist parties. The amendment facilitated the foundation of the country's first socialist party, Worker's Party of

Turkey [TİP], which laid the grounds for the activities of the illegal socialist organizations after the 68' student movement. When the anti-imperialist protests of the 1968 shored up the activities of these illegal groups, mainly THKP-C [Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi; People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey] and THKO [Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu; People's Liberation Army of Turkey], the chaos quickly rose, which was to be traumatically ended with a military intervention on March 12, 1971. The amendment of the constitution with this intervention, aiming at restricting the liberties granted by the 1960 constitution, facilitated and justified state violence to the extent that the leaders and many members of these illegal movements were physically annihilated.

The liberal constitution of 1961 was blamed for facilitating the formation of extremist movements during 1960s, causing too much social and political strife. Consequently, the constitution with its excessive permissiveness in terms of leftist ideologies –which was a "luxury for Turkey" according to Nihat Erim, the prime minister of the interim government– was once more amended. That the army first liberalized then more severely restricted the constitution may at first sight seem paradoxical. This paradox, however, stems from the army's fractioned structure: While the intervention was planned to be undertaken by the socialist clique within the army, it was eventually carried out by another clique, the members of which were Kemalists but still conservative enough to be terrified by the idea of a socialist Turkey. By 1973, when the martial law was lifted, thousands of people suspected of socialist ideas had been detained, tried, prisoned, and tortured. The TİP was dispersed and Behice Boran, the co-chairperson of the party, was arrested and sentenced to fifteen years. The leaders of the guerrilla groups were sent to gallows. On the surface, the political and social strife seemed to be ended through the physical annihilation or detainment of those involved, only to resurge during mid-1970s when the members of the former guerrilla movements were released and reappeared on

the stage with a revised strategy. This second phase of chaos was ended once and for all by the military coup of September 12, 1980, the most tragic event in the history of the left in Turkey.

Turkey entered 1980 as an extremely polarized country, unable to resolve the political violence and the economic crisis that had been continuing for more than a decade. The Justice Party [Adalet Partisi; AP] government, with Süleyman Demirel in office as prime minister, was having a great trouble in terminating the political violence of which some well-known politicians were also victims.[1] On September 12, 1980, the army took over the country with Kenan Evren, one of the most horrific figures in the history of Turkey, as the leader of the coup.[2] Meanwhile, the MGK [Milli Güvenlik Konseyi; National Security Council] was formed, the junta that ruled the country until the general elections of November 1983, under Evren's governance. The MGK was later to become the symbol of the perpetuation of the army elite's sway on politicians.[3] During this three years of restoration period, until which Turkey had the dynamics necessary for a democratization process similar to Southern European countries such as Greece or Spain, the junta regime slowly but steadily integrated nationalist-conservative discourse into the mainstream ideological fabric of the country. In the course of time, thus, the army had distanced from its Kemalist principles, and chose to collaborate with a conservative government mainly for economic reasons.[4] After 1983, with a renewed constitution criticized

[1] Nihat Erim, the prime minister of the interim government following the military coup in 1971; Gün Sazak, the vice chairman of MHP [Nationalist Movement Party]; Kemal Türkler, the head of the DİSK [Confederation of Revolutionary Worker's Unions].

[2] When Evren died in 2015, many people in Turkey celebrated it. On the other hand, what Murat Belge writes about this figure is very illustrating of the mindset of the general public: "The ordinary citizen had finally found a leader who has the same mindset in Kenan Evren's person. In any coffeehouse in the country, you could easily find five or ten types like him. The other political leaders of Turkey were above the cultural average. But Evren, the leader of the September 12, was no different than those who said 'You shall hang fifty of them…'. Well, his difference was that he literally had the possibility of hanging them." Murat Belge, *12 Yıl Sonra 12 Eylül* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2000) 27.

[3] Suavi Aydın, Yüksel Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi* [History of Turkey: From 1960 until Today] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014) 335.

[4] The scope of the present thesis does not permit a detailed account of the role of the army in Turkish politics. For a detailed account in English, see: William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); for the relationship between the army and the left-wing politics, see: Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

even by its advisor, it became apparent that the democratic sectors within the society were severely overpowered. As the democratic dynamics were unable to be reproduced and restored, Turkey entered a process of political polarization of a kind erstwhile unknown, bringing about the expression of socio-economic differences through essentialist-culturalist discourses.[5]

The extent of the 1980 coup was indeed overarching. By the end of the year following the coup, the total number of arrested people were above 122.000. A great many cases of torture have been observed, with the duration of custody up to fifteen days. According to Human Rights Association, 171 of the 400 suspected deaths during the junta regime have been approved to have resulted from torture. According to official statements, 210.000 lawsuits have been filed. 71.000 of these were due to the 141. and 142. articles, and 14.000 of them were due to the 163. article.[6] Thus, a total number of 85.000 people were tried only due to their thoughts. Until October 25, 1984, fifty people have been sentenced to death and executed, as if affirming Kenan Evren's gnomic sentence: "Should we not hang and feed them?"

Although their motivations and outcomes differed, all three military coups met on a common ground: They all strove for a custodial democracy and a subsidiary populism. On the other hand, what makes the 1980 coup different than the others is that it has been the definitive event both for the belated modernisation of the country and its socialist elements. The self-confidence of the society in its capacity for modernisation and development with its own resources and decisions, strengthened especially after the 1950s, was completely broken with this intervention. On the socialist sphere, the coup has been the event which unnerved the movement and created a perennial sense of defeat and nostalgia.

[5] *Ibid*, 341.

[6] Based on the Italian penal code of the Mussolini period and lifted with the Anti-Terror Law of 1991, these articles mainly restricted the right of organization and freedom of speech by prohibiting class-based organizations and propaganda. With the 141. article decreeing death sentence to those who are "inclined to destroy the established economic and social order", these articles obviously targeted the socialists.

Thesis Argument

Going back to the question that this thesis is centred around: Why did March 12 coup produce its own genuine literature, whereas September 12 coup did not? This question has occupied the minds of a few scholars until today, but given the complexities of the events, it is hard to give one definitive answer. Besides, the question concerns the quality rather than the quantity of literary works produced: Even though the number of books produced after the September 12 coup d'état was greater than the previous one, it did not result in a specific literary tradition, while scholars and critiques, since the middle of the 1970s, talk about a *March 12 Literature*. In fact, there are a great number of people who *began* to write following the September 12 coup, not originally being writers. The attempt to witness was consequently abortive, mainly because the content of these works was the personal drama rather than the collective trauma.

When asked during a long and savvy interview why we talk about a March 12 literature and not about a September 12 literature, Şükrü Argın states that the former was still a relatively narratable event, whereas the latter was not. Later in the interview, Argın astutely articulates both the local and the global reasons why literature in Turkey, slowly but steadily, became more incapable of conveying social disasters. Among the global reasons were the rise of pan-capitalism and the definitive decline of the left towards the end of 1980s. The local reason mainly concerned, and a few scholars who have been preoccupied with the question have agreed on this, the later generations of socialists being less engaged with art in general, and literature in particular, than the former generations.

Another distinction between the literary outcomes of the two periods at issue is proposed by Nurdan Gürbilek. According to Gürbilek, the "fireball" of March 12 coup had fallen nearer to literature than that of September 12. One main reason for that, she argues, is

the fact that the literary left sympathized more deeply with the victims of March 12. The source of this sympathy was that the youth leaders who were sent to gallows by the junta regime during March 12 coup were considered "innocent" by many people, mainly because they did not commit any violent acts during their illegal activities. In fact, in some memoirs, these urban guerrillas are sometimes alluded to as "kids."

The objective of the present thesis is to seek for an alternative answer to this question: Why did March 12 coup d'état produce its own genuine literature, whereas September 12 coup d'état did not? To this end, I will gravitate the focal point towards the relationship between the trauma of torture and the ways in which it can and cannot be narrated. Parallelly, I shall problematize testimonial literature.

The March 12 coup was an event without a referent. It was the event that first institutionalized torture in Turkey, making it an imperative to problematize witnessing to this specific historical period. In her influential reading of *The Plague* by Albert Camus, Shoshana Felman states that "[s]ince we can literally witness only that which is within the reach of the conceptual frame of reference we inhabit, the Holocaust is testified to by the Plague as an event whose specificity resides, precisely, in the fact that it cannot, historically, be witnessed."[7] How is it possible to narrate *an event without a referent*? How can one convey one's testimony to an event that is essentially not witnessed to? In search for an answer to these questions, I shall reckon with Marc Nichanian's powerful claim:

> In the testimony of the survivors, the event itself is never told. *Indeed, how can the impossibility of witnessing be witnessed?* [sic] For this reason, only a linguistic act which is beyond witnessing can witness to the impossibility of witnessing. This ought to be a linguistic act which is positioned at the limits of language. It ought to be an act which, in facing the Catastrophe, experiences this limit within itself. This linguistic act which is beyond witnessing (which experiences

[7] Shoshana Felman, "Camus' *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing" in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 104.

> helplessness and impossibility within itself), this act which carries language to its limits, is literature."[8]

Even though it is not fully clear what would be contained in the definition of Catastrophe – capitalized by Nichanian– and what not, one staid aspect of a catastrophic event is, as Felman states, the absence of a referent, making the event *historically impossible*. In the light of these arguments, the contention of the present thesis is that the March 12 coup generated its own unique literary mode because, as an event without a historical referent, it could be narrated only through literature. Although it was the second coup in the history of Turkey, it differed from the first in many aspects, especially in that it introduced torture in its institutionalized form.

The third coup on September 12, 1980, forming the other side of the question, was already *historically possible*. Even though its destructive and definitive quality has dwarfed the March 12 coup, it did not produce aesthetically appreciable testimonial literature.[9] It is true that literature in Turkey definitively changed following this event, giving birth to a current of postmodernist novel and paving the way for many successful writers, such as Turkey's Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk.[10] However, the novels that aspired to witness the oppression and violence of their period failed to do so within the literary conventions and consequently created arid documents.

Murat Belge states that the September 12 stands as "year zero", hindering the intergenerational knowledge transfer between radical leftist groups.[11] In fact, the reason why this third military coup had such a success in determinatively disbanding the radical leftist

[8] Marc Nichanian, *Edebiyat ve Felaket* [Literature and Catastrophe] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011) 33-34. This book is the outcome of a series of conferences given by the author in 2009 at various universities in İstanbul, originally published in French and translated into Turkish. Since I do not have access to the original version, all quotations are my retranslations from the Turkish edition.

[9] Here I mainly refer to the novels written right after the coup. Otherwise, later generation of novelists wrote many competent novels and short stories. For example, see: Aslı Biçen, *Tehdit Mektupları* [Letters of Menace] (İstanbul: Metis, 2011); Birgül Oğuz, *Hah* [A ha] (İstanbul: Metis, 2015).

[10] Çimen Günay Erkol, "Issues of Identity and Ideology in Turkish Novel during the Cold War" in Örnek C., Üngör Ç. (Ed.), *Turkey in the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 109-129, 125.

[11] 44.

movements was that these groups had already been unnerved by a sense of failure stemming from the intensifying political violence and the many schisms unfolding in the mid-1970s as a result of the second coup in 1971. Thus, besides the global rise of the right-wing during the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the decade, the main reason for the dissolvement of the leftist movement in Turkey is the coupling of these two interventions. And this coupling introduced something more which was hitherto non-existent: the systematization of torture. Even though it had always been in use since the Ottoman period, the practice of torture began to be widely exercised in Turkey after the March 12 coup, its intensity and scope gradually increasing and reaching its peak after the September 12 coup and during the 1990s.[12]

Thesis Structure

In the first chapter, a political panorama of the period between the first military coup in 1960 and the aftermath of the second one in 1971 will be outlined. I will specifically focus on socialist discussions and how different groups, both legal and illegal, interacted with each other and finally became too fractioned to form a strong resistance and opposition to the government. This chapter is intended to provide the background knowledge of state violence, which began to intensify with the March 12 intervention, in order to better guide the reader into the themes of the two novels. Accordingly, it portrays how the socialist movement emerged in Turkey, only to be violently repressed with the March 12 intervention.

In the second chapter, before moving to the analysis of the two novels, the relation between the trauma of torture and its representation are thoroughly examined. Departing from Elaine Scarry's influential proposition that torture is "world-destroying" and interrogating into the affective dimension of torture, it is argued that physical pain brought about by torture severely limits the person's, either as a prisoner or a witness, ability to perceive and narrate the

[12] For a detailed account of the use of torture during the Ottoman period, see: Taner Akçam, *Siyasi Kültürümüzde Zulüm ve İşkence* [Atrocity and Torture in Our Political Culture] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995)

events objectively. What happens here is the evasion of the political, or more precisely, conversion of the political categories into psychic ones. This is not to propose that these two are necessarily separate from each other. However, when the category of say "freedom" is distorted in a socialist's mind as a result of torture, it produces many other detrimental emotions, such as guilt and shame. These emotions contribute to the complications which hinder narration as a cathartic practise, and more importantly, which at times could go so far as to border identification with the perpetrator.

In the third and final chapter, two novels are analysed in the light of the historical background and the theoretical framework accounted in the first and second chapters. These two novels, *Yaralısın* [You are Wounded; 1974] by Erdal Öz and *Şafak* [Dawn; 1975] by Sevgi Soysal, remained as the best-sellers amongst the literary testimonies of the period. *Yaralısın* tells the story of a male political prisoner who is severely tortured. Since we see a direct encounter here with the practice of torture, I will specifically focus on what torture does to the body and the relation between torture and speech. *Şafak*, on the other hand, is centred around two characters: a male revolutionaire and a female socialist intellectual, both of whom struggle with the violence they witness and severely question their political engagement. In *Yaralısın*, I analyse the affective processing of torture. In *Şafak*, I explore how the protagonists are drawn into a perennial sense of guilt and thus struggle with a self-lacerating conscience.

Torture is a collective trauma, a historical disaster, an infliction of severe pain where history produces only shattered individualities. Even though they are necessary, historical and political interpretations of such an atrocity are not able to articulate the extent to which these individualities are stripped of their integrated psychic capabilities. The most profound experience of the survivor, that stricken, speechless entity, trampled through several generations, is to be found in the literary sphere: A limit experience would be told only by taking language to its limits, and this is only possible through literature. Furthermore, a literary

testimony to historical events, beyond recording facts, gives us the possibility to reconsider and reconfigure the relation between history, narrative, and individual, since literature is not only about transmitting what is known, but also about enabling an insight into the unknown. From this perspective, every analysis of literary testimonies to historical events is, each time, a new contribution to questioning the ethical relationship between history and individual.

Chapter I: A Political Panorama of Turkey, 1960-1971

This chapter will focus on the political panorama of Turkey during the decade between the first military coup in 1960 and the second one in 1971. Carrying the purpose of providing the reader with the necessary background knowledge for the analysis of the novels, the chapter's focus is on the socialist politics of the country, which started with the foundation of the first legal socialist party and ended with the brutal annihilation of the radical leftist movements. Admittedly, the history of the left-wing movement in Turkey after the 1960 intervention is rather convoluted, and the task of untangling it is beyond the limited scope of the present thesis. Still, I go all out to explore in detail the emergence and spread of socialist movements, and portray how the 1971 intervention has been the event that systematized and justified state violence. As the topic of the present thesis requires outlining the traumatic quality of the period in question, I shift the emphasis to the state brutality in the middle of the chapter. As will be seen, this period has been the "first act" of the socialist movement in Turkey, with the foundation of a legal party, the emergence of other leftist groups seeking to collaborate with the army, and most importantly, the guerrilla activities of youth groups generated by the 68' student movement. Although the division and the annihilation of socialist groups were to be more definitive with the third coup d'état in 1980, the hitherto unexperienced state terror during this period engendered the first trauma that the socialists of the country had ever encountered, peaking at the execution of the leaders of the young guerrilla groups, thus leaving an ineffaceable impact on the socialist movement in Turkey.

First Military Coup, First Legal Socialist Party, Other Emergent Socialist Circles

On 27 May 1960, the decade-long rule of Democrat Party [DP] was overthrown by a military intervention. On the basis that the Kemalist principles were not respected and the country had drifted to Islamism, the constitution was thereupon amended by the military rule. Since the intervention had an anti-Islamist quality and the new constitution permitted the

foundation of legal socialist parties, there began a long-standing debate amongst the intellectuals whether the intervention was a "coup" or a "revolution." Setting their sight on the "progressive" aspect of the new constitution and the non-hierarchical organization of the actors, some intellectuals absolved the intervention, acclaiming it as a "revolution." Others, on the other hand, reprobated it as a "coup", seeing it as the symbol of a long process, which initiated the tradition of military intervention in Turkey, enacted political tutelage on the parliament, and incriminated by way of executions, imprisonments and prohibitions those who are legitimately in power.[13] In the course of time, the second of these stances has been widely established and the event is referred to as a military coup in Turkish historiography.

The most important outcome of the coup was the new constitution, which differed from the previous ones with its two paradoxical qualities. On the one hand, this new constitution expanded the scope of rights and liberties of the citizen, which had formerly been severely restricted. Accordingly, it put specific emphasis on the social quality of the state and enabled the foundation of the institutions that would serve this quality. Conversely to this liberal content, it debilitated the democratic space as it decreed the foundation of tutelary institutions and sanctioned their tight control on the parliament.[14] Despite this latter point, the new constitution allowed the emergence of the first legal socialist party of Turkey.

Workers Party of Turkey

The Workers Party of Turkey [TİP; Türkiye İşçi Partisi] was founded by a group of worker leaders on February 13, 1961. Besides unions and workers, the party was enthusiastically supported by intellectuals and activists. In 1962, the supportive intellectuals and academicians joined the party upon the invitation of its leaders, and Mehmet Ali Aybar, an

[13] Suavi Aydın, Yüksel Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi* [History of Turkey: From 1960 until Today] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014) 79.
[14] *Ibid*, 89.

international lawyer and a member of the Russell Tribunal, was elected as the chairman of the party. The strong socialist character of TİP stemmed from the fact that most of its members, including those in office, had a background in workers struggle. In terms of the political stance it represented, TİP was a first in the history of Turkey, and consequently the most unusual actor of the post-coup period.

What distinguished TİP from the other socialist movements of the period was essentially its inclusion of the Kurdish issue in its programme. During their third congress in 1968, TİP addressed the Kurdish issue, and took it one step further in 1970 during the fourth congress by overtly stating that the "Kurdish people live in the east of Turkey" and they are subjected to "oppression, terror, and assimilation."[15] Furthermore, TİP established unprecedentedly strong ties with peasants and workers, which suggested that the party's dynamics in the rural areas was beyond doctrinal socialism. These strong ties were further fortified by TİP's policy of including workers and peasants in the executive staff. After all, the party was initially founded by union leaders, and TİP believed that this was an effective way to steel the "base class" in the pursuit of their demands. A radio talk by Hamdi Doğan, an uneducated peasant who became a representative of TİP in Gaziantep with the 1965 elections, felicitously illustrates the sentiment that the party had invoked: "I am Hamdoş, the son of Azap Ali from Gaziantep. I came crawling covered in dust and dirt. I want to tell you about my misery. (…) I used to believe that my agha would feed me. But this was not the case. I learned that it was me who fed my agha. (…) We no more want aghas who feed people like dogs to throttle the poor."[16]

[15] Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasi İdeolojiler* [Currents: Political Ideologies in Turkey] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017) 620.
[16] *Ibid*, 617.

In the second half of 1965, the first general election after the coup was held. Following the foundation of TİP, the People's Republican Party [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi; CHP] had declared its ideology to be the "left of centre" in an attempt to ensure that its young members continued upholding the party. However, before and during the election period, it became increasingly clear that the majority of the young supporters of CHP was now in support of TİP. With the great support it received from the public, TİP had fifteen representants in the parliament with the 1965 general elections. This was not only the first and last time that a socialist party found a place in the Turkish parliament, but it was also TİP's greatest success.

TİP's success is highly significant for the socialist movements in Turkey, so much so that it cannot be limited to a success in elections. Every agent within the society, those who had political demands and were ready to struggle for them, communicated with TİP whether directly or indirectly. TİP was the only organizational centre that the socialists were gathered around until 1969. Yet later, the party's fate took a different turn with schisms and the student movement of 1968. Unable to relate to the radicalized actions of the youth, the party became too fractioned to continue functioning and to maintain its strong impact. The party was closed down in 1971 after the military coup.[17] Thus, the rise of socialism that began with the electoral success of TİP in 1965 was mitigated, in the late 1960s, by schisms and conflicts that left their mark on the socialist movement.

Yön *and MDD*

In order to better grasp the conflicts that emerged within leftist circles, we shall look at other socialist groups, *Yön* and MDD, that took shape following the 1960 coup. As we shall

[17] And it was re-established in 1975 with Behice Boran as its chairwoman. However, it never regained the strong impact that it catalysed during its first period. The history of TİP could be the subject of another study. For a comprehensive history, see: Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi* [The History of the Workers Party of Turkey] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014). For the most recent study, see: Artun Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa: Türkiye İşçi Partisi, 1961-1971* [From Hope to Loneliness: Workers Party of Turkey, 1961-1971] (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi, 2020)

see, since TİP was unable to respond to the emerging demands of the youth during those years, the university students were to get closer to these other groups, only to form, later on, their own radical groups that aimed at urban guerrilla activities. These guerrilla groups, however, lasted only some six months and were violently annihilated by the 1971 coup. Though they were short-lived, they left an enormous impact on the succeeding socialist groups.

Published between 1961-1967, *Yön* [Direction] was a political magazine that created a tremendous impression on leftist circles. In its first issue, *Yön* published a sort of manifesto that was signed by 1042 intellectuals, suggesting the strong support that the magazine received.[18] Tanıl Bora states that *Yön* was a "cornerstone in leftist ideology's proliferation and its gaining of a hegemonic impact on intellectual life."[19] According to the magazine's manifesto, the country needed a rapid economic development for the actualization of political ends such as reaching a more civilized stage, building democracy on a more solid ground, or ensuring social justice and good education.[20] Although the manifesto did not utter the word "socialism", Doğan Avcıoğlu, the leader of the movement, soon wrote an article with the title "Why Socialism?" in which he stated that socialism was the "only remedy for Turkey in its wish for a rigorous development in a free order."[21] For the members of the *Yön* movement, therefore, the key incentive in espousing socialism was to invigorate economic development. Consequently, they valued socialism mainly with anti-imperialist motivations, which corresponded to a slightly leftist version of Kemalism in Turkey.

The ineluctable result of this stance was the sense of nationalism that began to strengthen within the movement around the middle of the decade. According to Tanıl Bora, starting with its first issue, the magazine had "invested in the polemical value of nationalism."[22]

[18] *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 109.
[19] *Cereyanlar*, 609.
[20] *Türkiye Tarihi*, 109.
[21] *Ibid*, 109.
[22] *Cereyanlar*, 610.

Furthermore, even though it strove to generate an influence on TİP during the first half of the decade, *Yön*'s faint belief in parliamentary politics had gradually dissolved, and the movement turned away from the party after the 1965 elections. Accordingly, rather than placing their trust in parliamentary democracy, *Yön* established itself as a rather radical movement and sought collaboration with the "progressive" elements within the army for its purpose of giving a new *direction* to the politics and economics of the country.

In 1963, the executive cadres of *Yön*, led by Doğan Avcıoğlu and Mümtaz Soysal, established the "Socialist Culture Association", an organism that advocated for a "socialism peculiar to Turkey."[23] As stated above, this assumed peculiarity had stemmed from the idea that the capitalist development had generated a trenchant class conflict in underdeveloped countries such as Turkey. To gain a better knowledge of this peculiarity, these cadres maintained that a thorough sociological and historical analysis of the country was necessary, whence the nationalism of the movement arose from. Following the 1965 elections, the two leaders of the movement were to have strong disagreements on strategic matters, thereupon the association was closed down.

Besides this disagreement between the two leaders, the conflict between them and Mehmet Ali Aybar, the chairperson of TİP, was to be intensified following the 1965 elections. The difference between the two could be summarized as a difference between a shortcut to the revolution that relies on the army (mainly the Kemalist officers within the army) and a long road based on raising awareness amongst the working class.[24] Within the context of the 1968

[23] *Türkiye Tarihi*, 111.

[24] The relation of the socialists in Turkey to Kemalism and the army is an intricate topic and could be studied in another work. For the purposes of the present thesis, I shall confine myself to state that leftist ideology in Turkey has been very much determined by the internalization of Kemalism and a lack of a class struggle paradigm. In such a setting, Workers' Party of Turkey was an exception, and while its chairperson Mehmet Ali Aybar was influenced by the New Left movement, other members of its executive cadre, such as Behice Boran, advocated for "scientific socialism." According to Özgür Mutlu Ulus, the relation of the Turkish left to the army constitutes a paradox: "An interesting feature of the leftist movements [during the 1960s], which is also important for the following periods, was that the revolutionary circles had built their revolutionary theory and practice mainly on the support of intervention by left-wing military officers. Only the Workers' Party of Turkey had advocated a

student movements, this long road was not appealing enough for the youth who were now becoming increasingly radicalized. In fact, Doğan Avcıoğlu's 1968 book, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* [The Order of Turkey], had a great impact on this new generation of radicalized socialists as well as pretty much every socialist of the period, including quite a few of officers in the army. Rather than being an authentic analysis, though, *The Order of Turkey* was a "committed political programme deduced from revising the underdevelopment literature of the period."[25] What Avcıoğlu did in this influential book was to embrace "national revolution" rather than "socialism." According to Avcıoğlu, amongst the available ways of development of the period –"communism", "American type", and "national revolutionist"– the latter was the most suitable for Turkey's conditions.

The espoused national revolution was to be led by the "nationalist intellectuals of petty bourgeois origin" which corresponded to "military-civilian nationalist revolutionists" or the Kemalists in Turkey. Avcıoğlu maintained that the "national liberation revolution" commenced by Mustafa Kemal in 1923 was interrupted by the multiparty regime of 1946 and was cut to the bone when the Democrat Party came to power in 1950, catalysing a "counter-revolution." The "comprador bourgeoisie" had taken the reigns with the DP regime, dragging the country into a dependence on imperialism by way of an "American type of development", which eventually "did not engender any serious industrial development in underdeveloped countries, and increased the social distress by solidifying the unjust distribution of income." The "nationalist revolutionaries" of May 27 intervention, he continued, had stemmed the tide of this economic injustice, but the "revolution" failed to establish a political order in accordance with its objectives. The Justice Party that came to power in 1965 was as well a representative

parliamentary road for transition into socialism and rejected transformation initiated through a coup. This was actually one of the grave paradoxes of the left: revolutionary currents had advocated carrying out a revolution, or more simply a change of order, through the initiative of the 'forces of order'." Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 3.

[25] *Cereyanlar*, 611.

of the comprador bourgeoisie, and its intent was to aggrandize the dependency of the country on the United States. To overthrow this government through parliamentary means was impossible, since the "historically outdated general ballot" could do nothing but bestow the right-wing with political power. As a result, as Avcıoğlu championed, the only way to seize power was through a military intervention.[26]

As a matter of fact, the ideas in Avcıoğlu's book were mostly the corollary of the earlier theorizations that stemmed from the abovementioned disagreements between *Yön* and TİP. Acting as the catalyser of the first serious fractures within the socialists, the debates between these two movements had magnetized other long-lived socialists such as Mihri Belli and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, both of whom took the side of *Yön*. In the second half of 1966, the magazine *Yön* had published Mihri Belli's famous article, "With Whom and Against Whom in Democratic Revolution", which had formulated National Democratic Revolution [Milli Demokratik Devrim; MDD]. Attracting many socialist students and paving the way for the subsequent radical guerrilla movements as will be discussed below, the MDD formulation had basically inseminated the ideas that were to be conveyed in Avcıoğlu's book and that reflected the ideological framework embraced by the majority of the socialists at the time. According to Vehbi Ersan, these debates could be highly fruitful in understanding the country's leftist politics, especially the role of the army in it, were it not the fact that they continued, rather than on an ideological-theoretical platform, with "everyday concerns with a mere interest in having an impact on the movement of the masses."[27]

Mihri Belli was an "old rifle", who was highly respected by the youth for his earlier activities in the Communist Party of Turkey.[28] Formulated for the first time in 1966 in *Yön*, his

[26] *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*, e-book.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] "Old rifle" (Tr. Eski tüfek) is a term that is used in Turkey in reference to old-aged individuals who had taken part in illegal leftist activities. In fact, Mihri Belli sometimes wrote with the pseudonym "E. Tüfek" or "E. Tüfekçi", making a reference to the Turkish term and thereupon creating a personal mythology. Obviously, it is a

MDD formulation was further matured in magazines *Türk Solu* [Turkish Left; 1967-1971] and *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergisi* [Aydınlık Socialist Magazine; 1968]. Similarly to Doğan Avcıoğlu, Mihri Belli believed that the Kemalist revolution was an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution that could not be completed, since the Democrat Party rule made a counter-revolution. The military coup of May 27 had been effective in hindering these counter-revolutionary forces. Thus, according to Belli, there was no great difference between Kemalism and socialism, and this latter, in a way, was the means to complete the national democratic revolution that was launched by Mustafa Kemal. Replete with xenophobic, even at times racist language, Belli's thinking claimed that Mustafa Kemal's greatest deed was to enliven national pride, and socialism was a natural outcome of it. Mihri Belli, together with his wife, Sevim Belli, had a very influential role in introducing the Marxist-Leninist literature in Turkey in the 1960s. Unfortunately, though, as they made no bones about interpreting these texts in accordance with their ideology, they made distorting interventions such as adding the adjective "national" to "democratic revolution."[29] Again like Avcıoğlu, Mihri Belli openly favoured collaboration with the army.

The efforts for collaboration were not unrequited by the army. Some Kemalist officers, too, were seeking radical reforms in compliance with their fidelity to the Kemalist principles of independence, nationalism, statism, and revolutionism. Gradually building their influence on the executive level as well, these officers, too, wished to emancipate the country mainly from Western imperialism. Their favouring of a military intervention was backed by *Devrim* [Revolution], a magazine that began to be published in 1969 by Doğan Avcıoğlu as a continuation of *Yön,* which terminated its activities in 1967. According to Vehbi Ersan, *Devrim*

highly gendered term. For a competent analysis of masculinity within the Turkish socialist circles, see: Sercan Çınar, *Between dissidence and hegemony: the formation of socialist masculinities in Turkey in the 1970s* (Budapest: Central European University, 2016) (Unpublished master's thesis)

[29] *Cereyanlar*, 654.

could be considered as the media outlet of the army. To portray the great influence that the ideological-political framework drawn by Avcıoğlu in this magazine and elsewhere had exerted on army officials, Ersan cites the words of Celil Gürkan, a major general and a leading figure amongst the pro-junta cadre: "In our armed forces, *The Order of Turkey* had such a great and extensive impact, it had become a reference book that passed from hand to hand. I never forget that instance when our four-star rank general Faruk Gürler [later the commander of the army during the 1971 coup] said to me: 'Celil, an officer who has not read *The Order of Turkey* is defective in my eyes.'"[30]

As has become obvious until this point, an important part of the socialists had been in close connection with the army, and this latter, as a result of their strong faith in Kemalism, had been willing to collaborate with the socialist radical movements led by Doğan Avcıoğlu and Mümtaz Soysal. Our exploration thus far, however, may have left a paradox unresolved: while the intervention had been planned by socialists, the target of it was eventually the members of radical socialist movements. In a nutshell, Avcıoğlu and the Kemalist military officers in support of him attempted an intervention on March 9, 1971. However, the intervention failed, and ultimately, the actual intervention on March 12 was enacted by another military clique that did not include the Kemalists. Before delving into the increasing violence, the military coup, and the subsequent guerrilla groups, let us now explore the disengagement of the radicalized youth from the MDD movement.

***Dev-Genç* and the Subsequent Armed Movements**

In 1964, the university students had begun to get politically organized. On December 17, 1965 various university clubs came together and formed the Federation of Intellectual

[30] *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*

Clubs [Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu; FKF].[31] Whereas TİP was initially influential on the administration of the federation, it lost its grip towards 1969, and those who were close to TİP were consequently cast out. The leaders of the later guerrilla groups, such as Mahir Çayan and Deniz Gezmiş, were all initially members of this federation. As TİP was no more influential, the federation had espoused "militant struggle", expressing their affinity with the MDD. As a result of some disagreements, the federation had a congress in October 1969 and changed its name to Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu [Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey], abbreviated as *Dev-Genç*. In a short span of time, *Dev-Genç* became the organizational pivot of the leftist movement. On the one hand, the new generation was under the strong influence of the 1968 global student movements, with Maoism gaining popularity amongst the youth, whence the strong support for the MDD in Turkey arose from. On the other hand, this new dynamic generation of socialists wished to cut ties with the tutorship of the old generation, leading them to espouse the Cultural Revolution of China rather than Soviet bureaucratism. In a sense, the new generation, rather than following the nationalism proposed by the MDD, was in favour of patriotism, which necessitated conceding the self-determination principle.

Following the university occupations of 1969, many members of *Dev-Genç* were wanted by the police. Meanwhile, the militant tendencies were becoming solidified and Mahir Çayan was expressing the necessity of a guerrilla struggle. In this line, a good number of members of the federation were sent to Palestine for guerrilla training. When eleven members were crossing the border on their way back to Turkey, they were arrested but soon released. After that, they joined with Deniz Gezmiş, Sinan Cemgil, and Yusuf Aslan, who by then was preparing the People's Liberation Army of Turkey [THKO]. Initially, the purpose of THKO was to get organized as an urban guerrilla group. But later, the members decided to start the

[31] The literal translation of "Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu" is the "Federation of Idea Clubs." However, I found it suitable to translate as "Intellectual Clubs" since these were the places where students got engaged in lively discussions on social and political matters of the period.

struggle from the rural to the urban areas. Beginning from November 1970, the group constructed strategic build-ups in the mountainous areas of Malatya in Eastern Turkey. On December 28, 1970, they raked through the police station in front of the U.S. embassy with the aim of protesting against the shooting of a student and to initiate the struggle against "American imperialism." Meanwhile, they robbed two banks to finance their ammunition. On February 15, 1971, they attacked and occupied for days the American base in Ankara, eventually kidnapping an American sergeant. Following this, they kidnapped four other soldiers from the American radar base in Ankara, after which the group finally publicly announced its existence and its demand for a ransom on March 4, 1971.

Meanwhile, Mahir Çayan too was in search of a new underground organization. In the last months of 1969, Mahir Çayan and some other members formed the nucleus of the new group, People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey [THKP-C].[32] The group began to work in the rural areas in the summer of 1970. During the 1970 congress of *Dev-Genç*, Mahir Çayan gave a speech explaining the purposes of this new group. In this speech, Çayan stated that the revolution was to be undertaken by "professional revolutionaries" and the "worker-peasant mass", and this purpose needed a "war organization." Accordingly, the revolution was to take place in the leadership of this new organization, on the basis of the worker-peasant collaboration, and from the rural to the urban areas. These ideas were also expressed in an open letter written by Mahir Çayan on January 1971. Besides being the strategic outline of the group, the letter also expressed the definitive rupture from the MDD movement and the old generation it represented.[33] Afterwards, the organization robbed many banks. In hindsight, it became clear that, even though these two groups assumed a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary perspective, their

[32] Mahir Çayan was the leader of the group. Other members of the leaders' cadre were: Ulaş Bardakçı, Münir Ramazan Aktolga, İrfan Uçar, Yusuf Küpeli, Hüseyin Cevahir. Soon joined: Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Sırrı Öztürk, Necmettin Giritlioğlu, Bingöl Erdumlu.
[33] *Türkiye Tarihi*, 189.

rupture from the MDD was not entire.[34] Rather, they had disagreements on the issues of strategy and leadership.

Another illegal movement that adopted armed struggle was the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist [TKP/ML] and its armed wing the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey [TİKKO], founded after the military coup on April 1972. The leader of the movement, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, was ideologically close to Maoist socialism and he organized the movement accordingly. Unlike THKP-C and THKO, which had bases in the East but maintained their activities in İstanbul and Ankara, TİKKO focused its energies in Malatya, Elazığ, and Tunceli in the East of Turkey, and later on the Black Sea coast. Like the other two movements, its purpose was to carry out an armed struggle from the rural region to urban space. The ideological peculiarity of Kaypakkaya was that, unlike Mahir Çayan and Deniz Gezmiş who maintained that Kemalism had degenerated in time, he referred to Kemalism as "fascism" from the beginning.[35]

As the second military coup was approaching, many students in big cities were in great activity with the aim of giving support to THKP-C and THKO. The first day of March 1971 witnessed a six-hour conflict between the students and the security forces at Middle Eastern Technical University [Ortadoğu Teknik Universitesi; ODTÜ], during which a soldier died, and many students were arrested. However, chaos and provocation had started long before.

Strife at Universities and Beyond

The student activities that began on July 1968 did not cease until the military coup. In most of the universities in big cities, the majority of students were directly or indirectly in contact with socialism, and they remained active through forums, occupations, and boycotts.

[34] *Ibid*, 191.
[35] *Cereyanlar*, 662.

Eventually, these protests were to transgress the borders of universities and to turn into a wave of anti-imperialist protests.

Between 1967 and 1969, some American warships belonging to the sixth fleet were anchoring outside numerous Turkish harbours. During this period, the students organized many anti-imperialist demonstrations, especially to protest against the atrocities of the United States in Vietnam. The greatest of these protests was organized on July 1968 in İstanbul under the leadership of Deniz Gezmiş and his friends. During the protests, two students were killed. Simultaneously, some students were breaking the windows of American News Center in Ankara. On February 1969, students and workers organized another meeting to protest against imperialism. Meanwhile, the right-wing newspapers of the period were provoking the masses, telling that they should "give the communists their lesson."[36] Consequently, when the protesters gathered on February 16, 1969 to protest against the sixth fleet again, a group of people attacked them and stabbed two protesters to death. Referred to as "bloody Sunday", this was the event that aggravated animosity between left-wing and right-wing. In 1970, the number of students who were killed because of this animosity rose to eighteen.

On November 1968, the American ambassador, Robert Commer, who formerly served in Vietnam, was appointed to the American Embassy in Ankara. On his arrival day, some 1500 students from the Middle Eastern Technical University were gathered at the airport. However, Commer was secretly transported to the city centre as the Ankara police department had received the news beforehand. Upon learning that, students moved to the city centre and attacked American shops and clubs. When Commer arrived at the University on January 1969 to pay a visit to the rector, the students burned his car. This protest was later named as the "first guerrilla protest of the National Liberation War."[37] In other words, student movements and

[36] *Türkiye Tarihi*, 163.
[37] *Ibid*, 165.

their protests were increasingly assuming a form of guerrilla fight against imperialism. In 1968 and 1969, many protests were turned into violent street conflicts with the police that continued for days.

As the socialist students were thus getting closer to militancy, they were being pointed at by the government as the cause of many unidentified murders that were political in nature. On April 13, 1970, Necdet Güçlü, a lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at Ankara University, was killed. On that day, the nationalist Islamist groups had assaulted the Faculty of Medicine, and Güçlü was killed during the subsequent conflicts. Even though some of these attackers were arrested and sentenced, the murder was eventually classified as unidentified since the bullet did not match their guns. On November 27, 1970, a sabotage fire had broken out in Atatürk Cultural Centre, and some parts of the building were severely damaged. The media blamed socialist groups as the perpetrators. However, a forensic investigation produced no results, and the real perpetrators or the source of the fire remained unidentified. This and similar provocative events were used as a way to scapegoat the leftist groups, and to suggest that an "intervention" to put things right was necessary. Following the coup, as will be seen below, many leftists were tried for these unidentified incidents.

With the foundation of THKO and THKP-C, the strategy of the left was changed: The struggle that began with protests, meetings, or street conflicts with the police and the right-wing groups, continued with guerrilla activities. Even though they were short-lived, these first radical militant groups of Turkey have left an ineffaceable mark on the socialists of Turkey. The junta regime of the March 12 intervention physically annihilated the leaders of these groups: Mahir Çayan and his comrades were murdered in Kızıldere on March 30, 1972; Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, and Yusuf Aslan of THKO were sent to the gallows on May 6, 1972 in Ankara Prison; İbrahim Kaypakkaya, the founder and the theorist of TKP(ML)/TİKKO was tortured to death on May 18, 1973 in Diyarbakır. Mahir Çayan, the "oldest" of these militants,

was twenty-six years old when he was killed, and that they were killed at a very young age aggravated the traumatic impact of the event.

March 12

The radical officers in the army believed that the Justice Party government did not respect the constitution and was taking the 27 May "revolution" backwards. They wished for radical populist reforms, having a "revolution council" in power, loyal to the ideals of independence and republic of Atatürk. With this aim, a junta was organized, titled "Council of Revolution of the Armed Forces", and the date of the intervention was set on 9 March 1971. However, on that day, the leaders of this organization came to an agreement with Memduh Tağmaç, the Chief of the General Staff, and Cevdet Sunay, the president of the republic, both of whom are known for their rightist thoughts. The motivation behind such an agreement was the conviction of Tağmaç that the leftist movement had established an important impact within the army and was in the process of preparation for a revolution which would result in communism. The leaders of the council being Kemalists, they would also not want communism. Eventually, however, the March 12 memorandum reflected the sentiments of the radical officers and, as a result, created an illusion for them, as well as for the socialists: Many leftist organizations and parties stated their support for the memorandum.[38]

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[38] 1- Meclis ve hükümet, süregelen tutum, görüş ve icraatlarıyla yurdumuzu anarşi, kardeş kavgası, sosyal ve ekonomik huzursuzluklar içine sokmuş, Atatürk'ün bize hedef verdiği uygarlık seviyesine ulaşmak ümidini kamuoyunda yitirmiş ve anayasanın öngördüğü reformları tahakkuk ettirememiş olup, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin geleceği ağır bir tehlike içine düşürülmüştür. *[By their ongoing attitude, opinions and activities, the parliement and the government severely endangered the future of the Republic of Turkey by leading our country to anarchy, to fraternal fight, and to social and economic unrest; by causing public despair about reaching the level of civilization endowed by Atatürk and failing the accrue the reforms delivered by the constitution.]*

2- Türk milletinin ve sinesinden çıkan Silahlı Kuvvetleri'nin bu vahim ortam hakkında duyduğu üzüntü ve ümitsizliğini giderecek çarelerin, partilerüstü bir anlayışla meclislerimizce değerlendirilerek mevcut anarşik durumu giderecek, anayasanın öngördüğü reformları Atatürkçü bir görüşle ele alacak ve inkılap kanunlarını uygulayacak kuvvetli ve inandırıcı bir hükümetin demokratik kurallar içinde teşkili zaruri görülmektedir. *[It is considered necessary to democratically found a powerful and credible government which would find remedies for the sorrow and hopelessness of the Turkish nation and its Armed Forces about this calamitous environment; would evaluate these remedies in the parliament with a supra-party attitude and end the present anarchic situation; and would approach the constitutional reforms from the perspective of Atatürk and apply its laws.]*

The command echelon's first and foremost aim was, in Memduh Tağmaç's words, to "stringently stop" the far-left movement, including its elements in the army. The first step was to liquidate the radical officers; and a good number of generals, admirals and colonels were forced to retire. On March 19, the president Cevdet Sunay appointed Nihat Erim as the prime minister of the country. Even though Erim proclaimed that his would be a "reform government", this short-lived government which functioned under military tutelage had, in Tanıl Bora's words, "much debated anti-democratic practices with the maxim of 'stopping the anarchy'."[39] Besides, the government directed itself towards tight economic policies, and reserved itself in terms of external policies. On July 21, 1971, TİP was closed down on the accusation that it was a "separatist" organization, alluding to its inclusive policies with regards to Kurds. A couple of days later, on July 26, its co-chairperson Behice Boran and some other members of the executive staff were sued on the basis that they "transformed the party into a secret communist party."[40] Many of the staff were sentenced, Behice Boran being sentenced to fifteen years in prison on the basis of the notorious 141. article of the Criminal Law.[41]

The military coup intervened with the constitution, paving the way for arbitrary state violence. The first interim government with Nihat Erim as the prime minister lifted most of the articles that secured democratic liberties. In a way, the parliament was governed by the army. The title of the eleventh article was changed from "The Essence of Civil Liberties" to "The Essence, Limitation, and Abuse of Civil Liberties."[42] In this way, the "security of the state" was strictly prioritized and any act to maintain it was justified. Further, the "abuse" of civil

3- Bu husus süratle tahakkuk ettirilemediği takdirde, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri kanunların kendisine vermiş olduğu Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni korumak ve kollamak görevini yerine getirerek, idareyi doğrudan doğruya üzerine almaya kararlıdır. Bilgilerinize. *[In case it is not immediately accrued, the Turkish Armed Forces is determined to fulfil its duty to protect the Turkish Republic endowed to it by law, and to directly take control. Please be informed.]*

[39] *Türkiye Tarihi*, 221.
[40] *Ibid*, 223.
[41] See the footnote 6 in the introduction.
[42] *Ibid*, 224.

liberties outstripped their "use." Another important change was made to the thirtieth article. With this, the time of custody which was beforehand twenty-four hours was now forty-eight hours. Also, hitherto non-existent, the collective crimes were granted one-week custody. On March 15, 1973, a paragraph was added to this article stating that the detention period for crimes that were in the scope of State Security Courts [Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri; DGM], founded with this new constitution, was extended up to fifteen days.[43] The extension of the detention periods secured the time needed by the state officials for inflicting torture. The cases of death in custody and forced disappearance began to appear in Turkey with this new constitution.

On April 26, 1971, the government declared martial law in eleven cities where the workers' movement was strong.[44] The trigger of the declaration of martial law was the arrest of Deniz Gezmiş and Yusuf Aslan, the leader and a member of THKO, on March 16 while on their way to join the other members of the group deployed at Nurhak mountains in Malatya. Even though the two were caught, the others were still in the mountains. In the cities, meanwhile, THKP-C was continuing its activities, and the government was afraid that the university students would continue their protests in support of THKO and THKP-C. With the martial law, workers' strikes and all other kinds of acts of resistance were prohibited. Besides, many detentions took place that soon turned into arrests. "This military intervention," Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın state, "unlike the one on May 27 which targeted the political elite, was directly aimed at the social opposition and thus was a kind that Turkey had just met."[45] Besides the radical left within society, the radical officers within the army were also liquidated, which was followed by interrogations and torture. A group of bureaucrats and journalists,

[43] *Ibid*, 225.
[44] These cities were: Adana, Ankara, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, Hatay, İstanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Siirt and Zonguldak.
[45] *Ibid*, 229.

amongst whom were major general Celil Gürkan, who was considered the leader of the leftist clique within the army which initially planned the coup, the staff colonel Albay Talat, and the journalists Uğur Mumcu and İlhan Selçuk, were interrogated and tortured at Ziverbey Villa in İstanbul. Later to become highly notorious, the Ziverbey villa tortures were led by Faik Türün, the commander of the first army of Turkey, who was to become a deputy of the Justice Party and to be the presidential candidate in 1980. During Ziverbey villa tortures, the country met "counter-guerilla."

Three days before the declaration of martial law, on April 23, the prime minister, Nihat Erim, had given his famous speech which was to name a large-scale operation undertaken against radical leftist groups: "There are no precautions we cannot take against those who strive to disintegrate Turkey. Our precautions will hit like a sledgehammer on their heads."[46] On May 23, the notorious Sledgehammer Operation was initiated as a response to the kidnapping of Ephraim Elrom, the consul general of Israel in İstanbul, on May 17 by the members of THKP-C. Curfew was declared in İstanbul. Many houses were raided, and people were detained. With this large-scale operation which resulted in a great number of detentions and arrests, the leftist groups were considerably erased from the public sphere, including journalists, academics, unionists, and politicians. On May 21, even before the operation was declared, the newspapers wrote that 547 people had been detained.[47]

THKP-C had published a notice after the kidnapping, asking for the freedom of all leftist detainees, especially of Deniz Gezmiş and Yusuf Aslan. Without a doubt, the government did not take the note seriously, and aggravated the intensity of its intervention since, despite the curfew, Elrom was not found. Besides those who were already taken, the government initiated a search operation broad in scope against all members of THKP-C and

[46] *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu* (e-book)
[47] *Ibid.*

THKO, and this operation was accompanied by a large-scale campaign of denunciation. The members Cihan Alptekin and Tayfun Cinemre were arrested during the operations. On May 31, 1971, Sinan Cemgil, Kadir Manga, and Alparslan Özdoğan were killed by security forces on Nurhak mountains, while they were preparing for guerilla activity and making propaganda in the villages. Meanwhile, Mahir Çayan and Hüseyin Cevahir, the main suspects of the Elrom incident and the members of the leaders' cadre of the movement, had sheltered in a flat in Maltepe in İstanbul with the daughter of a commander as hostage. On June 2, the flat was surrounded by security forces and Hüseyin Cevahir was killed, while Mahir Çayan was arrested wounded.

The trial of Deniz Gezmiş and the other members of THKO started on July 16, 1971; the trial of Mahir Çayan and the other members of the THKP-C started on August 16, 1971, by Ankara and İstanbul military commissions respectively. As the trials continued, Mahir Çayan and his friends escaped the prison on November 30, 1971. Following this jailbreak, a heavy-handed chase started, accompanied by violent protests in the streets, the end of which was a disaster traumatizing many people.

The Liquidation of THKO and THKP-C

The jailbreak had unrelentingly upset the government officials, some of whom resigned following the incidents. Upon this, prime minister Nihat Erim was expected to resign as well. However, Memduh Tağmaç, the commander of the armed forces, had exerted in its full scale the impact of the army on politics. On December 11, 1971, a second interim government was formed with Nihat Erim as the prime minister again. On February 1972, the government extended Memduh Tağmaç's term in office, thus making it obvious that the new government was to be as undemocratic as the former, and to function under the shadow of the army.

A great number of intellectuals, journalists, academics, politicians, and bureaucrats had already been arrested and tortured. Even Mümtaz Soysal, one of the founders of the aforementioned *Yön* movement and the dean of the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University, was sentenced to six-years prison by the military commission. The new government continued to canalize all its energies to liquidate the radical leftist movement. On January 10, 1972, the military court of appeals submitted the capital punishment of Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, and Yusuf Aslan to parliament. It was approved on March 10, 1972, with 238 votes in favor and only 53 votes against.

On February 19, 1972, the escapees had an armed conflict with the police in İstanbul. While Ziya Yılmaz was arrested wounded, Ulaş Bardakçı and Koray Doğan were shot dead. Meanwhile, Mahir Çayan had escaped. Accompanied by four other members of the group, he moved towards the Black Sea region. On March 26, 1972, they kidnapped three technicians from the radar station of NATO in Ordu with the objective of protesting against the death sentence of Deniz Gezmiş and others. On March 30, they were denounced to security forces by the local authority (mukhtar) of Kızıldere, a village in Tokat where they were sheltered. The village was besieged, and ten members of the group were killed. Mahir Çayan, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Cihan Alptekin, and Saffet Alp survived in a house in the village. When the commander of the security forces asked them to go up to the roof to have a negotiation, Mahir Çayan was killed with a fire brutally commenced. Others moved in, killed the three technicians they kidnapped, and continued the conflict until shot dead. With only Ertuğrul Kürkçü surviving, THKP-C was once and for all liquidated in Kızıldere.[48]

[48] In his poem, "Geography of Pain", Turgut Uyar alludes to this killing with the lines: "you know it is time to see the strong mountains / I know very well if you shout right now / or if you shoot in a row / the city would cavort maybe all the birds would fly / not maybe, certainly / but / one of them would certainly stay"

The very last protest against the death sentence had thus failed. Besides this biggest protest, others had also taken place. On May 3, 1972, a group of protesters with four people had hijacked a plane from İstanbul to Sofia. On May 4, Kemalettin Eken, the commander of the gendarmerie forces, was attacked and heavily injured. One of the attackers was killed, and the others were arrested. The hijackers surrendered on the same day and took refuge in Bulgaria. Sadly, these last resorts did not work. On May 6, 1972, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, and Yusuf Aslan were sent to the gallows in Ankara (Ulucanlar) Central Closed Prison.

During 1972, a good number of cases were filed against the leftist organizations. Already dispirited by the state terror peaking at the killing of the leaders' cadre of the guerilla groups, the leftist organizations were mostly accused of unidentified provocations that had previously taken place mainly in İstanbul and Ankara. The best known of these cases was the "Bomb Case", filed against eighty-four people, most of whom were Kemalist-leftist officers who had initially attempted a failed coup. The case was a result of previously mentioned Ziverbey villa tortures. Most of the defendants were eventually set free. The importance of the case, though, was that it definitively liquidated the remaining leftist organizations, while further disgracing them in the eyes of the public.

As we have seen, the leaders and many members of these radical movements were physically annihilated, and thus the radical movements were dispersed and destroyed. The first decade of an influential leftist movement in Turkey, which began with the foundation and subsequent success of TİP, thus ended with armed protests and large-scale state terror. In her memoir, Sevgi Soysal recounts how the political prisoners of the 1971 coup would resort to humor when talking about the swiftly worsening conditions of the period: "When people referred to the previous imprisonment period, they would mockingly say 'Back in those times, there was socialism'. Each day, when talking about the previous day, people would say 'The

conditions were good back then'".[49] The second period of the leftist movement, which began in 1974 when the imprisoned were freed and ended violently again with the military coup of 1980, generated the most irreversible schisms. Still, the impact of this first period overtook the leftist movement in such a scale as to yield the very beginning of a long period seamlessly marked by trauma.

The outcome of this period was, in Tanıl Bora's words, an "abortive resistance."[50] Before the leftist resistance became eventually "abortive" following the military coup of 1980, the literary left occupied a crucial position in making the unprecedent state violence of the 1970s visible, producing literary testimonies not only as authors, but also as prisoners who were at times exposed to torture themselves. Their engagement with literary testimony, in a way, affirmed Marc Nichanian's powerful claim that a limit experience could be narrated only by taking the language to its limits, that is, through literature. Beyond the limit experience that they set out to convey, the narrative structure of these literary testimonies proves to be a great source of insight into the scope of the impact of the state violence on leftist circles. At a closer look, the authors' choice of words and concepts, the direction that the author gives to the sentences, or the micro and the macro syntax of the narrative all portray that part of the trauma that is not readily visible in other forms of narrative such as history books or official testimonies. It is in this sense that I explore the intricacies of trauma in the next chapter.

[49]Sevgi Soysal, *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007) 78.
[50] *Cereyanlar*, 681.

Chapter II: Trauma, Torture, Representation

In this chapter, I address the various psychic processes generated by a traumatic event, whether it is an abrupt, thus overwhelming instance, or systemic violence and abuse extended over time. While one of the results of a traumatic event is the impossibility of narration, this latter is on the other hand the only means to overcome the overwhelming, disintegrating impact of events. In the specific case of torture, speech becomes completely shattered. Still, the affects that are being modulated during the infliction of torture creates a line of flight whereby words can assume their expressive power again. As explored in the previous chapter, the Turkish left witnessed unprecedently traumatic losses with the military coup of 1971, which found their most vivid expression in the literary sphere. An exhaustive exploration of the multifaceted impacts of trauma, particularly of the ways in which trauma obliterates narration, will thus furnish us with the knowledge necessary for mapping out the psychic processes at work in the two novels that are the topic of the next chapter.

Ever since its appearance in the eighteenth century, the notion of trauma has slowly and steadily come to occupy a large space in the social sciences and humanities. With psychoanalysis contributing to its gravity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it assumed a great role in understanding the impact of grave events on individuals as well as collectivities, especially the mass atrocities of the "short twentieth century." Although there are some prominent non-psychoanalytic works exploring the social mechanisms of trauma and related notions such as memory or loss, psychoanalysis has remained the most influential approach to the representation and reconstruction of trauma. The objective of the present chapter is to first elaborate on the complex nature of trauma and its representation, with a specific focus on the trauma of torture and the ways in which it finds its expression in literary representation. As we will see, both in the theoretical framework of this chapter and in the analysis of the two novels undertaken in the next chapter, the shattering of the self as a result of the distortion of

attachments brought about by a traumatic event often paves the way for a regressive identification with the aggressor in ways not readily discernible. And this regression, as we will see in the next chapter, is what determines the representation of the events in our two case examples.

Trauma

In its broadest definition, trauma has often been described as the psychic response to an "unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena."[51] Whether on collective or individual level, an event that is attributed a traumatic content has the effect of breaching the sense of self, sometimes in ways so violent that the working-through becomes an impossible task, carrying away the affected towards a perennial feedback loop of melancholy. Conversely, though in an ideal setting, trauma can be the source of a refiguration of the self with "lessons learned" from the violent event, indicating a successful working-through.

Alessandra Lemma and Susan Levy identify four core themes of trauma: the attack on attachment, perversion of the capacity to mourn, the breakdown of symbolic functioning, and the nature of identifications.[52] The convoluted interplay of these four themes, as we shall see, lay the basis for the aftermath of a traumatic event, usually appearing in flashbacks, intrusive thoughts in the form of a self-lacerating conscience, or incapacity to put the event into words, all of which are experienced as equally impairing as the original event itself. Without going much into psychoanalytic detail so as to avoid unnecessary digression, I shall outline the symptomatic revenants of these four themes with the intent of providing a very broad

[51] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) 91.
[52] Alessandra Lemma and Susan Levy, "The Impacts of Trauma on the Psyche: Internal and External Processes" in Alessandra Lemma and Susan Levy (Ed.) *The Perversion of Loss: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Trauma* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004) 1-20.

framework that facilitates understanding the mechanisms of individual as well as collective trauma.

Firstly, a major traumatic incidence undermines one's resilience, this latter being very closely connected to the nature of attachments that one has established, the most definitive of which is the primal attachment that is established with the mother. Secure attachments provide one with the inner strength necessary for enduring and ultimately overcoming great turmoil. Insecure attachments, on the contrary, hinder the growth of this strength and eventually produce a "false self" without an authentic substance. Whether secure or insecure, a traumatic event attacks on these idiosyncratic attachments, leaving the person with a great rupture in the sense of self with an amputated resilience. Lemma and Levy contend that this attack is also an attack on the possibility of dialogue, resulting in the waning of the capacity to narrate the traumatic event because, they further argue, the "complex process of giving meaning, and ultimately verbal meaning, to thoughts and feelings is based on the quality of our earliest attachments."[53]

Secondly, a traumatic experience is always associated with loss. In its complex setting, the loss that is associated with trauma, rather than belonging to the realm of memory, evoke the reexperience of the event. With secured attachments abrogated, the traumatic event creates a breach where unhealthy and often aggressive attachments may incubate, whence the identification with the perpetrator is formed. Whereas the possibility of a healthy mourning always holds, in most cases the grief of trauma becomes pathological by drifting the person into a perennial state of melancholy.

This type of identification, thirdly, gives way to the collapse of symbolic functioning, the most devastating outcome of which is the loss of the psychic capacity to interpose thought between impulse and action.[54] This breakdown of the symbolic functioning is the reason why

[53] *Ibid*, 11.
[54] *Ibid*, 13.

the person constantly relives the traumatic event in dreams or other kinds of flashbacks, because the "capacity to differentiate between a scenario, rehearsing a memory and experiencing a live situation is collapsed."[55] In other words, the ego, now damaged, cannot take the risk of planning or thinking about the situation. Consequently, one is confronted not with a mere reminder of the event but an immediate re-enactment of it: the disaster is taking place here and now. The breakdown of the symbolic functioning leads to another symptom of trauma, that is, the distortion of the capacity to put feelings and thoughts into words, to create a narration of the traumatic event, which is the important part for the present thesis and will be discussed in detail below. According to Lemma and Levy, while there is a regression into a state where language and meaningful communication is severely curtailed, the emotions nevertheless are not equally truncated. On the contrary, no more contained in the expressive language, these emotions run unbounded in the psyche, at times assuming destructive proportions and leading the individual into aggressive behaviour towards others as well as oneself.

Lastly, the exhaustion of the capacity of symbolic thinking, turning the previously symbolic identifications into concrete ones, has important repercussions on the quality of the individual's identifications. Consequently, one's capacity to maintain the boundaries of one's self, to address who one is becomes an impossible task, as a result of which "a concrete regression to an identification with the aggressor seems unavoidable."[56] In such a situation, instead of staying in their real condition, the individual acts in phantasy and "on the mind of the other." This is one of the many defensive responses that the individual gives to the traumatic scenario; it is an attempt to control the inner conflict and somehow reduce the threat to the self. This regressive identification, along with the disconnection between expression and emotions,

[55] *Ibid*, 14.
[56] *Ibid*, 19.

is, as we shall see, the main coupling that determines the narrative structure of our case examples.

Although these themes seemingly belong to the sphere of individual trauma, their outcomes can be observed in collective trauma as well. To give the most historically central example, the relation between trauma and narration began to be discussed after the Holocaust, the event after which several generations of survivors, writers, and artists had great difficulties in expressing the event in a meaningful way. Having given this example, one might argue that engaging with the debates on the Holocaust and the corollary theories to explain other historical traumas that are much less extreme would mean reducing the particular severity of the original event. However, one might also argue that –and this is one of the contentions of the present thesis– the Holocaust is the ultimate instance that raises in an accentuated form problems that might as well arise with respect to other historical traumas, in that they might as well be highly, if not equally, invested with affect or call for a broad reconsideration of values.

Whether it is an individual or community, a traumatized entity feels different than the rest of humanity, which brings separate individuals together to form a community or creates stronger bonds between those belonging to an already existing community. Considered from this perspective, communality is a fundamental trait of trauma. On the other hand, though, a traumatic event may also bring to the surface the unpalatable, inconspicuous fault lines that run in a community.[57] As we shall see, the trauma of the 1971 military coup indeed brought to the surface those fault lines, and paved the way for ruptures and cliques within leftist circles so irrevocable as to engineer their determinative liquidation with the intervention of 1980.

Perhaps the most important trait that distinguishes historical or collective trauma from personal trauma is that the former results from oppression and severe violence over an extended

[57] Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community" in Cathy Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995) 189.

period of time, while the latter assumes the quality of being abrupt and overwhelming. In any event, just as it creates a breach in the human psyche and turns it into a defenseless, vulnerable mechanism that lacks the vital tools for coping with suffering and privation, trauma also creates a breach in the most basic tissues of community that guarantee its sustainability and intactness. If considered as a *blow* on those tissues, collective trauma may still be attributed that same abruptness. Yet the realization that the community, the "we" as its members call it, no longer exists is a tardy, and at times treacherous, process.

It would, however, be a futile endeavor to make clear-cut distinctions between collective and individual traumas. Traumatic events form a spectrum that ranges from one single overwhelming instance to prolonged, systemic abuse. That single event might affect a single individual or a whole community, as in the case of natural disasters. The systemic abuse, on the other hand, might obviously take place either within domestic or social spheres. Regardless of how one might quantify it, a traumatic event is always communal whether it brings separate individuals together (as in the case of domestic violence), strengthens the bonds, or makes visible formerly latent breaches in the community. Although one always tends to repress a traumatic event and send it to the dark corners of memory, one thing is essential for this communality to be formed: The traumatic event should be addressed, articulated, and represented. This, however, is perhaps the most difficult part since trauma severely disintegrates normally integrated functions of the psyche: One can feel intense emotions while one is not able to remember; or s/he can remember every single detail with no emotion. Still, the healing of a collective trauma very much depends on the affected individuals' resourcefulness to publicly address it, whether through testimonies, legal pursuits, or artworks.

Torture

One such traumatic event that occurs at the interstice of the individual and the community is torture. Even though the atrocity of torture in its modern form takes place in a closed space, seemingly inflicted on one individual, it results in a collective trauma in that it always targets a certain political group. Torture results not only in the obliteration of the individual, stripping one from his or her individuality through unrestrained violence. It also results in the exclusion of the victims from the social sphere on the grounds that their acts are a serious threat to the "national security", expressing the fragility of the state power. Accordingly, torture always takes place in a "state of emergency", in which the state circumscribes legal rights and extends its arbitrary power.

Reduced to a mere body without a speech, the tortured subject is severely dehumanized. Hannah Arendt identifies three stages of the process of dehumanization, in the end of which are produced "living corpses." First, the legal persona is killed through disenfranchisement; second, the moral persona is killed through making conscience irrelevant or even inconsequential, mainly by making the prisoner act against his/her will through various forms of betrayal; third, the human individuality is killed through torture, deprivation and severe distress.[58] The struggle against this dehumanization, "in spite of a number of heroic acts of resistance by tortured subjects […] is first and foremost a matter of winning a battle in the public sphere."[59] In other words, then, coming to terms with the violence of torture is possible only through its representation in the public sphere. Before delving deeper into the representation of trauma in general, and torture in particular, we would at this point benefit from exploring what the pain of torture does to the body.

[58] Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 30.
[59] Idelbar Avelar, *The Letter of Violence: Essays on Narrative, Ethics, and Politics* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 28.

Bodily Pain

Whether from legal, psychological, or political perspective, one devastating aspect of torture has been widely agreed upon: By destroying his/her ability for speech, torture reduces the prisoner to a body, a body sent back to a state anterior to language, where only groans and whimpers are possible: "In self-negation, [the prisoner's] flesh becomes a total reality."[60] Intense pain thus destroys language besides its striving for totality. In other words, bodily pain eliminates all that is not itself, first and foremost speech. The violence of torture, thus, produces consent by the distortion of the voice.

In her influential book, *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry elaborates on the relation between intense physical pain, language, and power. According to Scarry, torture is "world-destroying" with its totality. Consequently, it is also "language-destroying": "[A]s the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject."[61] Verbal expression, for Scarry, is the primary means for self-extension to the world. It is thanks to speech, to voice, that the self is capable of extending beyond the limits of the body, of occupying a larger space than the body alone. This is exactly why, Scarry goes on, torture reduces the prisoner to a body and the torturer to voice, an opposition from which a "mime of power" emerges.[62]

From this opposition follow several other oppositions. Indeed, there is no larger a distance than the distance between the one experiencing intense pain and the one inflicting it. Even though the bodies of the prisoner and the torturer are in great proximity, the distance between them is colossal. In fact, they are in complete opposition: for the prisoner, everything

[60] Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) 33.
[61] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 35.
[62] *Ibid*, 45.

but the body and its pain is absent; for the torturer, everything but the body and its pain is present. And the fact that self-extension is no longer possible for the prisoner, the larger space that is occupied by the torturer turns into a spectacle of power. Scarry states:

> The prisoner experiences an annihilating negation so hugely felt throughout his own body that it overflows into the spaces before his eyes and in his ears and mouth; yet one which is unfelt, unsensed by anybody else. The torturer experiences the absence of this annihilating negation. These physical realities, an annihilating negation and an absence of negation, are therefore translated into verbal realities in order to make the invisible distance visible, in order to make what is taking place in terms of pain take place in terms of power, in order to shift what is occurring exclusively in the mode of sentience into the mode of self-extension and world.[63]

Although Scarry's argument that physical pain is language-destroying is well-grounded, her theory becomes questionable with regards to her account on the body. Scarry, as implicated in the subtitle of her work, sees the pain-inflicting experiences such as torture and war as "unmaking" of the world, of civilization. In such an account, rationality prevails over corporeal sensations of the body, its fluxing capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies and the world. Scarry's argument thus becomes limiting with its rational, liberal conception of subjectivity. What is more, she herself adds to the oppositions that she argues throughout her work: the torturer becomes uncivilized, while the prisoner in this equation becomes the civilized.

This is also the predominant contrast that we see in Erdal Öz's novel. The reader follows a story that is pivoted around the problem of "civilization" and "primitivity." The most visible flaw of this approach, as in Scarry's account, is that it assumes torture, or any kind of pain-inflicting act, as "uncivilized." Nevertheless, it is by now well attested that torture in its modern

[63] *Ibid*, 36.

form, taking place in closed chambers, is precisely a product of civilization. In order that our objection to Scarry makes sense, an interrogation into the affective dimension of pain is crucial. Scarry is obviously not interested in affect. In her thinking, the extension of the body into larger space is made possible not through affects, but through speech. But as we will see, it is precisely the affective dimension of pain that makes its expression possible, even though torture indeed destroys speech.

The Affective Dimension of Bodily Pain

It is true that torture reduces the prisoner to mere body, but it also is more than simple violence. Torture provokes, amplifies, and modulates specific bodily affects. As Michael Richardson states in his recent work, *Gestures of Testimony*, "[a]ffects resonate and amplify across and between moments, bringing the body in all its fullness and knowledge of the world into the ambit of torture and into inextricable relation of the torturer."[64] Richardson maintains that although pain per se is not pure affect, it involves many affective dimensions. Following Sara Ahmed's proposition that the question should be about what pain *does*, rather than about what pain *is*, he concludes that pain connects bodies rather than separating them.

This conclusion also owes to the conception of the body that both Richardson and Ahmed advocate for: an entity in flux, already moving beyond the skin's limits and the fixities of language. According to Richardson, "[p]ain's affects are what enables it to form the body as a lived thing in pain and in the world. And this affectivity also constitutes a potential line of flight between the pain of torture and its expression."[65] Thus, even though the act of torture shatters the tortured subject's language, it is the affective dimension of pain that makes possible the expression of pain inflicted by torture. Further, rather than clinging to its fugitive quality in the face of expression, it is important to address that "the experience and indeed recognition of

[64] Michael Richardson, *Gestures of Testimony: Torture, Trauma, and Affect in Literature* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2016) 38.
[65] *Ibid*, 145.

pain as pain involves complex forms of association between sensations and other kinds of 'feeling states.'"[66]

There is indeed an intricate interplay between the pain of torture and its shame, guilt, disgust. In any case, however, it finds itself a channel of expression. But with what vocabulary? How does the tortured subject express this complex interplay? What does the analogies that are employed to express the pain of torture implicate? Does the body and the position of the torturer have a role in this expression? Before moving into the detailed exploration of these questions in the next chapter through case novels, I shall close the present chapter by elaborating on the multifarious factors that enable and hinder the narration of trauma. I shall specifically focus on the tools that literary testimony provides for the survivors and the witnesses of systemic political violence.

Representing Trauma

Trauma, Jeffrey C. Alexander contends, is a socially mediated attribution which disturbs a collectivity's sense of identity.[67] In other words, no event is inherently traumatic. In the ideal setting offered by Alexander, the working-through of trauma occurs by defining the pain, establishing the victim, attributing responsibility, and finally distributing the ideal and material consequences, which is often undertaken by agents that Max Weber called "carrier groups." These groups could be elites or marginalized people, religious leaders or spiritual pariahs, generational or national groups. In any case, these are the groups who have "particular discursive talents for articulating their claims –for 'meaning making'– in the public sphere."[68] These steps are indeed crucial to restore the collective sense of self through reparation and coming to terms with the past, and they indicate a successful representation of a violent event on legal and institutional levels.

[66] Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 23.
[67] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012)
[68] *Ibid*, 16.

To transform individual suffering to collective trauma, according to Alexander, is cultural work. Unlike the stages of individual trauma (denial, repression, and working through), this cultural work requires symbolic construction and framing, creating a narrative that will serve the group as a departing point.[69] The signifying processes, the "spirals of symbolic signification" that this cultural work produces are mediated through institutional structures. Collective trauma, then, is neither individual suffering nor the events themselves, but the symbolic reconstruction and re-presentation of them in a relatively independent way.

The problem with Alexander's approach, though, is its wording which implies a naïve conviction that these steps are taken with little to no complication. At this point, one would benefit from complicating the process of trauma representation beyond structuralist formulations. With regards to literary representation of trauma, we find a number of flaws that exclude far different conceptions within Alexander's conception of "imaginative identification and emotional catharsis" that aesthetic representation of collective trauma is expected to facilitate.[70] The process of representing trauma is in fact much more intricate, consuming, and demanding. "Trauma", Dominick LaCapra argues:

> […] brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some viable extent counteract, a reenactment, or acting out, of that disabling dissociation.[71]

The dissociation between affect and representation occurs on many levels, specifically between then and now: One is not able to see the violent event as something that belongs to the past,

[69] Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elisabeth Butler Breese, "Introduction: On Social Suffering and its Cultural Construction" in Ron Eyerman, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elisabeth Butler Breese (Ed.), *Narrating Trauma: On the Impacts of Collective Suffering* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011) XIII.
[70] *Ibid*, 20.
[71] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001) 42.

and consequently fail to realize that s/he lives in today with a future and a myriad of possibilities in it. To this disorientation accompany a paradox that originates from trauma's paralyzing effect that is followed by involuntary repetitions of the event: While the most direct seeing of a violent event may result in an outright incapacity to know it, this immediacy may take the form of belatedness.[72]

Witnesses, just as survivors, are subject to this dialectic of trauma. The witness, as well as survivors, might and usually do find it troublesome to remain lucid and levelheaded with regards to a traumatic event. It is even more troublesome to find a convenient language that could flawlessly and persuasively convey what one has seen. Furthermore, because the event has the power to, as we have been discussing thus far, disintegrate one's normal functioning of the psyche, it is highly probable that the witness is able to tell the event only in fragments, undermining their credibility in the eyes of the public. To speak publicly about the atrocities that one has witnessed, then, is to provoke the stigma that is often attached to the victim. To speak about those atrocities in the literary sphere is even more troublesome, since literature in this case is expected to facilitate, as mentioned above, an "imaginative identification" with the victim.

Literary Testimony

Among literary theorists, the process by which reader constructs an affiliation with a fictional character is often termed identification. However widely employed, the concept of identification is imprecise, since it often blurs distinct, and at times disparate, phenomena. The term identification refers to an *allegiance* with a character, a process that temporarily weaves the reader's analytic capacities and thus drags him/her into a state where s/he cannot help but take in unquestionably whatever ideology or the worldview that the character represents.[73] In

[72] *Unclaimed Experience*, 92.
[73] Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 34.

reality, however, the relations between such alignments and the reader's affective and intellectual responses are not that readily predictable. In other words, when such an alignment occurs, as it always does, the term identification falls short in helping to distinguish between divergent mental processes that come into play.

Undoubtedly, reading a novel is a peculiar act that embraces a heightened psychological awareness and stipulates the reader with endless modulations of self-scrutiny, moving them into the inner depths of a character. Instead of identification, we would benefit from naming this process, following Rita Felski, recognition. Recognition in the literary sphere, unlike in politics, refers to a cognitive insight. In reading a novel, "something that may have been sensed in a vague, diffuse, or semi-conscious way now takes on a distinct shape, is amplified, heightened, or made newly visible."[74] With a little furthering of Felski's argument, one might state: In reading a novel that depicts a historical trauma, a previously nonexistent insight into the nature of events is generated inside the reader; in reading a literary testimony, the reader becomes the belated witness.

One should, however, use the term recognition with great caution since it risks confounding the political and the literary spheres. While political recognition refers to acknowledgment, literary recognition refers to knowledge; while the former refers to others, the latter refers to the self. Recognition in its political sense is a claim for acceptance and inclusion in the public sphere. The ideas that are at play in literary recognition, on the other hand, involve comprehension, insight, and self-understanding. Whereas political recognition entails public validation and visibility, "recognition in reading revolves around a moment of personal illumination and heightened self-understanding."[75]

[74] *Ibid*, 25.
[75] *Ibid*, 30.

One might argue that testimonial literature stands at the interstice of these two realms: While it furnishes the reader with an increased insight into the nature of the events and the ways in which survivors and witnesses are affected, it is also an expression of a demand, whether the author is a survivor or a witness, for a recognition of the collective and individual trauma on the public sphere. Still, what has already been redressed on the public level may still hauntingly persist in the literary sphere, as is the case with trauma fiction that continues to be written by the later generations who are neither survivors nor witnesses. More importantly, that which is recognized on a legal or institutional level may still carry its weight among the affected group of individuals, and the remainder of the trauma, that which always returns, or to put it in its most expansively used term, the open wound, always keeps on reclaiming recognition in the literary sense.

Testimonial literature still has something that stands at the interstice of these two realms: The determination to bear witness is lived both as an artistic and a political decision. As such, literary testimony does not only record events, but in its specific ways of narration, it opens up in the "belated witness, which the reader now historically becomes, the imaginative capability of perceiving history –what is happening to others– in one's own body, with the power of sight (of insight) usually afforded only by one's own immediate physical involvement."[76] Thus, beyond being a simple statement, literary testimony is a performative engagement between history and consciousness, between the witnesses of a historical trauma and the belated witnesses who now have the capability of recognizing the overwhelming impact of that trauma, "between the integrative scope of words and the unintegrated impact of events."[77]

[76] Shoshana Felman, "Camus' *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing" in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 108.
[77] *Ibid*, 114.

How does literature achieve this engagement? As we have thus far addressed, a traumatic event distorts the survivor's ability to put feelings and thoughts into words by breaking down the symbolic functioning. How does a literary testimony, despite this fact, is able to generate that sight "afforded only by one's own immediate physical involvement"? Literature has the full capacity of doing so since, as Marc Nichanian powerfully claims, an extreme event could only be told by taking the language to its extremes. Collective traumas are at the same time historical catastrophes which the survivors, those have a strong determination to heal, feel the responsibility to bring to the public knowledge. There is, according to Nichanian, a relation of *essence* between catastrophe and literature:

> In the testimony of the survivors, the event itself is never told. *Indeed, how can the impossibility of witnessing can be witnessed?* [sic] For this reason, only a linguistic act which is beyond witnessing can witness to the impossibility of witnessing. This ought to be a linguistic act which is positioned at the limits of language. It ought to be an act which, in facing the Catastrophe, experiences this limit within itself. This linguistic act which is beyond witnessing (which experiences helplessness and impossibility within itself), this act which carries language to its limits, is literature."[78]

A limit experience, that which resides outside the mechanisms of normal perceiving, of the conceptual frame of reference that historical subjects normally reside in, is tellable only through literature, through taking language to its limits. Still, as we shall see in the next chapter, this literary narration is never without problems. On the contrary, writing about a subject that inherently resists representation, the author is forced to give the sentences a particular shape, a shape that eventually determines the whole narrative. Again, as we shall see, our two case examples not only follow the general tendency of the March 12 novels towards the evasion of the political, but they also charge the political with a subversive morality that cracks open the fault lines generated by trauma. The recourse to this morality, which inherently belongs to the perpetrator, hints at a strong sense of guilt, demonstrating itself in the form of a self-lacerating

[78] Marc Nichanian, *Edebiyat ve Felaket* [Literature and Catastrophe] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011) 33-34.

conscience, and more importantly, of a regressive identification with the perpetrator. What is more, any kind of narrative act that aims to resist this identification fails, as a result of the overwhelming aftereffects of the traumatic encounter with state violence. To elaborate on these, let us now undertake the analysis of the two novels.

Chapter III: Two Novels

In this chapter, I undertake the analysis of two novels, *Yaralısın* [You are Wounded] by Erdal Öz and *Şafak* [Dawn] by Sevgi Soysal. *Yaralısın* is plotted around a male character who is exposed to torture. Even though the reader knows the character is engaged in some sort of political activity, the specifics of this activity are nevertheless unknown, enwrapping the reader in the sole bodily experience of torture. Accordingly, in my analysis, I focus on the inner speech of the character during torture, taking it first and foremost as an affective encounter between the bodies of the prisoner and the torturer. As *Şafak,* on the other hand, is centred around two characters', one female socialist intellectual and one male revolutionnaire, inner thoughts and memories pertaining to their political engagement and encounter with torture, I focus on the traumatic memory and the accompanying senses of guilt and shame. The reactions of these characters to their memories, evoked by their surroundings during custody, represent the self-lacerating conscience of the socialist individuals following the traumatic events of the March 12 coup. Thus, the analysis of the reactions of these characters, both in *Yaralısın* and in *Şafak*, endows us with a solid insight into how the socialists of the time coped, and at times failed at coping, with the unprecedently traumatic outcomes of the coup.

From Village Novels to Coup Novels

According to Berna Moran, the March 12 novels could be considered as a sort of continuation of the village novels of the previous decade, since the "social and political reasons that engendered the village novels progressively moved beyond the rural areas, and resulted in an explosion in the cities."[79] It is true that, in both genres, the audience sees similar motives in characters: search for justice, rebellion to order, etc. However, it is crucial to make one essential distinction: While village novels narrated the heroic acts of rebellion of peasants, the March 12

[79] Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* [A Critical Look at Turkish Novel] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994) 11.

novels focused on the aftermath of characters' struggle. In other words, in March 12 novels, the reader follows the story of passive characters who are, in a way, victims of large-scale state violence. Accordingly, in March 12 novels, the reader is in general left bewildered with a lack of knowledge in terms of the character's past and political engagement.

Defining himself as a "poor peasant child", the "writer of the worker and the peasant" in a propaganda speech he delivered in 1966 on state radio, Yaşar Kemal's novels are the first examples of what is known as the "village novel."[80] Even though Kemal himself finds this category misleading, stating rather furiously that "Faulkner and Sholokhov too write novels that are set in village, but no one calls them village novels," it has been widely in use starting from its emergence in the 1950s up until today.[81] Whether one should categorize these novels as such might be the subject of another study. In accordance with the scope of the present thesis, I shall confine myself to state that village novel is indeed a misleading term. Considering that Turkey's population was mainly settled in villages until as late as 1980s –the country was the "village castle of Europe" during the 1970s, according to Hobsbawm–, these novels have a quality that is situated beyond their setting: they map out the sociological fabric on which the society was etched. Lacking a philosophical tradition, Turkey is a country where philosophical matters have always been discussed within the sphere of poetry. Similarly, novel has been, up until today, the appropriate place to discuss sociological matters, especially during the first decades of the republican period where artistic and intellectual agency was severely restricted due to ideological reasons. During those years, maintains Behice Boran, "the Turkish left found its expression in art, and leftist thinking could influence the society mostly through art."[82] On

[80] This speech is available only in recorded form in Turkish: https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2018/05/12/tipli-yasar-kemal-trtden-sesleniyor-sen-oyunu-padisah-hayati-surenlere-verirsin-olur-mu/ (Accessed: 20.05.2020)
[81] Taner Timur, *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik* [History, Society and Identity in Ottoman-Turkish Novel] (İstanbul: Afa Yayıncılık, 1991) 89.
[82] Behice Boran, *Edebiyat Yazıları I* [Writings on Literature I] (İstanbul: Sarmal Yayınları, 1992) 97.

this long-standing, multifaceted relation of the literary to the political and the social, Sibel Irzık states:

> The Turkish novel has seen itself as a means of social critique and mobilization ever since its beginnings during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It has always exhibited a preoccupation with social and historical themes, ranging from the first novels' warnings against excessive Westernization to the romantic depiction of the spirit of the Anatolian people in the so-called village novels of the early years of the republic, or the criticism of class oppression and state corruption in the social realist novels of the 1950s. Even in the modern Turkish novels that place themselves more squarely within the mainstream Western novelistic tradition of narrating the evolution of an 'authentic' subjectivity, politics is never a 'pistol shot in the middle of a concert.'[83]

Beneficial to the present thesis in that it summarizes in a couple of sentences the long course of the Turkish novel, Irzık's statement is nevertheless in contradiction to my contention with regards to its description of the village novel. Apart from finding it a problematic category, I do think that village novels convey more than a "romantic depiction of the spirit of the Anatolian people." In fact, Irzık's statement would be factually correct if she included the village novels in the "socialist realist" category that convey a "criticism of class oppression and state corruption." Village novels not only emerged in the aftermath of the second world war, thus not belonging to the early years of the republic, but also their main purpose, too, was to treat the question of oppression and exploitation, and this was to be centred around peasants as the above reference to the demographic characteristic of Turkey until the 1980s suggests. Without a doubt, a hint of romanticism was present in these novels. Indeed, the protagonist of *İnce Memed* [Memed, My Hawk], the apogee of the village novel written by Yaşar Kemal, is a rather romantic rebellious peasant.[84] Further, in this novel as in the others written by Yaşar

[83] Sibel Irzık, "Allegorical Lives: The Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novels" 555
[84] The original work was published in 1956, and was translated into in English in 1961. For the latest edition, see: Yasar Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk* (London: Vintage Publishing, 2016)

Kemal, the epic occupies a great role, carrying the works to the borders of magic realism. In general, however, this romanticism is a little more than a modicum that does not hinder an insightful sociological analysis: Besides his romanticism, the protagonist Memed is equally realistic and rational.

Written during the 1950s and 1960s, village novels portrayed the daunting life of peasants who, being at the mercy of unjust policies of the state and the exploitation exerted by vicious landlords, were economically deprived and seek for a better life in rebellion. The search of a better life in these novels, however, sometimes occurs by moving to the cities. Cherished as a "master" by Yaşar Kemal, Orhan Kemal is the first novelist in Turkey who has treated this hopeful but wholly precarious journey, thus shifting the focus from the agricultural life of the peasants to the workers' life in factories. *Bereketli Topraklar Üstünde* [On Fertile Soil; 1954], for example, recounts the story of three friends who move to Çukurova from a tiny village in the hope of finding a work in factories. The reader follows the story of this search, and how in the end the three characters become weary and wretched: One of them dies from pneumonia; another's leg is swallowed by thrasher in the factory and he dies; only the last one returns to his village in urban clothing and with some belongings, however in profound resentment.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Orhan Kemal continued to produce the best examples of socialist realist novels as well as short stories, either set in villages or in cities, or portrayed the people who endlessly sway between the two, yet can embrace neither. In a 1960 interview given together with other four novelists, Orhan Kemal states that there remained "no difference between peasants and city dwellers."[85] According to him, the progress of capitalism in Turkey –which indeed became visible during late 1950s and early 1960s– urbanized villages, and sometimes created villages out of urban settings. This latter point is portrayed by the novelist,

[85] *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik*, 51.

for example, in *Eskici ve Oğulları* [The Ragman and His Sons; 1962] in which an urban family decides to move to a village in an attempt to become cotton labourers. Even though this erratic movement between villages and cities, resulting from the progress of capitalism, inspired Orhan Kemal for a literary representation, the major shift from the village scene to that of the urban in Turkish novel happens during and in the aftermath of the urban guerrilla movements. Most importantly, in the aftermath of the 1971 coup, the spaces of cotton fields and factories are to be replaced with torture chambers and the perturbing psyches of the victims and witnesses of torture.

Differently from village novels, where the author engages in a critical activity while also appealing to epic elements, the coup novels are literary testimonials written by survivors and witnesses of state violence. While village novels are the products of a certain period, the literary testimonials to military coups are still written even today by later generations. The quality of being a literary testimony to traumatic events makes these novels especially susceptible to obstacles in narration and in imaginative reconstruction of the events. In most of these novels, except allegorical ones such as Melih Cevdet Anday's *İsa'nın Güncesi* [The Diary of Isa; 1974], the traumatic elements are discernible, as in, for example, *Büyük Gözaltı* [Great Surveillance; 1972] and *Bir Avuç Gökyüzü* [A Handful of Sky; 1974] by Çetin Altan. In both of the novels, the reader follows the story of a character who is not able to make a distinction between thought and deed: In the former, a prisoner begins to imagine that he kills people, a phantasy that turns into a conviction of having actually killed people. In the latter, in a rather ironic language, the author recounts the story of a recently released prisoner who, upon imagining that he is being followed, locks himself in his house. Apart from these overt examples, the March 12 novels deal closely, and sometimes intricately, with the distinctive ways that the characters cope with imprisonment, torture, and death.

In his 1976 essay "A General Look at the March 12 Novels", Murat Belge distinguishes between two types of witnesses to violent events of the period: those who witness from the "inside", and those from "outside". Taking account of the outsize number of people who were imprisoned during the junta regime, he continues, this might be taken, very schematically, to be a distinction between those who are imprisoned and those who are not: while the imprisoned would constitute "inside", the public would constitute the "outside", and the novelists' function would be informing the public about the ones in prison. To be able to do that, however, the novelists themselves would have to be among those who are inside. At this point, the distinction in question goes beyond its schematic and material borders, and Belge maintains that the novelists are to be inside the revolutionary cause itself. The distinction henceforth becomes of invaluable importance, since "[t]he ones who write about the events from 'outside' will choose to sublime the revolutionists, whereas the ones who look at the issue from 'inside' will take a critical direction. Without a doubt, this would not be a destructive critique, but would carry the purpose of establishing something more right in the future."[86] Reckoning with Belge's distinction, I take *Yaralısın* to be novel written from the "outside." Although it is a novel about an imprisoned and tortured leftist, written by an author who himself had been imprisoned, *Yaralısın* focuses on one man's resistance in the face of torture by often heroizing him. Yet at a closer look, as we will see, this heroization is doomed to fail since the protagonist's resilience is severely impaired, and his attempts to distance himself from the torturer result in a narrative that is essentially determined by the inexpressibility of the event. On the other hand, *Şafak* could be qualified as a novel written from the "inside", as the characters' heightened self-awareness suggests, in fact so high as to complicate the analysis at times. However, as we will see, this self-awareness is in fact determined by a strong sense of guilt, emanating from the unpleasant memories of torture and bordering at identification with the perpetrator.

[86] Murat Belge, "12 Mart Romanlarına Genel Bir Bakış", *Birikim* 12 (1976): 8-16, 9.

Torture is one of the central problematics of March 12 novels. First institutionalized as a way of gaining information during the Algerian Revolution, torture made its way in this institutionalized form through Turkey exactly with the March 12 coup d'état. Murat Belge maintains that, in order to better understand the reactions against torture, one would have to make a distinction between two types of torture. According to Belge, the junta regime employed torture either to make the detainees "confess" what the regime needed to hear in order for a more brutal violence, or to gain information without knowing whether the tortured person really had that information or not. Belge emphasizes that the novelists of the time could not grasp this distinction, the result of which was an abstract perception of torture, as if it was something irrational, "primitive", backward. As we will see, this is exactly how the protagonist of *Yaralısın* perceives torture. In the novel, however, this misperception serves another purpose than what Belge suggests: By qualifying the torturer as primitive, the tortured subject endeavours to widen the gap between himself and the torturer in an effort to maintain his human dignity.

Belge continues by maintaining that torture is something rather civilized and "[t]he revolutionists all around the world are aware of this fact."[87] Similarly to Belge, I believe torture is rather rational, civilized, and precisely a modern tool; so much so that qualifying torture as a means of gathering information becomes somewhat outdated. In fact, the ultimate objective of torture as a modern tool is to produce a sense of guilt, endless self-loathing, and hatred within the tortured subject through the potential of betrayal, regardless of whether betrayal eventually happens or not. In other words, torture is never employed for a pragmatic reason, that is, to elicit information that would be useful to the perpetrators. According to Idelbar Avelar, "[torture's] purpose is to lead the tortured subject to self-incrimination […] and trap him/her in a perennial circle of guilt. Such forced production of statements in the tortured subject is *the*

[87] Murat Belge, "12 Mart Romanlarına Genel Bir Bakış", *Birikim* 12 (1976): 8-16, 13.

act of torture itself. [sic]" [88] We will see that, in *Şafak*, the protagonists are drawn into this circle of guilt. Even though, as two intellectual people, they have the capacity to direct a harsh self-criticism against themselves, this self-criticism is marked by a sense of guilt and shame, which at times evade the political and shores up a distorted morality.

Affective Processing of Torture in *Yaralısın*

The pain of torture, unlike other kinds of bodily pain, is never personal. It affects a wide range of individuals, institutions, and many aspects of daily life and language. On the other hand, the isolated character of the torture chamber makes it first and foremost an affective encounter between the bodies of the prisoner and the torturer. Even though torture is language-destroying as we have discussed in the previous chapter, it is primarily through affects that are provoked by this encounter that renders its expression possible. In our example, we will see that this encounter is utilized by the prisoner to widen the distance between himself and the torturer. We will also see that even though language, including figurative speech, still fails at times to properly describe the moment of torture, it is only through the recognition of various intertwined affects produced by physical pain that one can still, even derogatively, make sense of this failure.

Carrying the most widely employed metaphor of pain as its title, *Yaralısın* [You are Wounded] tells the story of a political prisoner who is exposed to severe torture. The reader does not know how or why exactly the character, a middle-aged male, is prisoned, and this lack of knowledge gives the novel a Kafkaesque quality – though in a negative sense. It is not clear whether the author made this narrative choice consciously. Still, when considered together with the fact that the novel is narrated in second person singular, amplifying for the reader the sense of being the subject of torture at the time of reading, it seems likely that the author made this

[88] Idelbar Avelar, *The Letter of Violence: Essays on Narrative, Ethics, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 31.

conscious choice in order to make the reader more vigorously engaged with the experience of torture. Either way and despite its flaws, *Yaralısın* is one of the bestselling, if not the most competent, novels of March 12 literature.

The novel's chapters are organized in a way that two stories intertwine: In one chapter is narrated the story of the prisoner arriving at the prison and finding himself a place amongst criminal –not political– prisoners, then in the next the story of him being tortured beginning from the moment of being taken away. Throughout the novel, the protagonist qualifies most of what he sees and is exposed to as "primitive." This opposition, the torturers being "primitive" and the prisoner and his alike being "civilized", appears as the most immediate, the most fundamental opposition that can be established in a situation where one is not fully aware of the events unfolding around them. That is to say, neither the fact of being in prison nor the experience of torture fits into the referential framework that the protagonist –and the author– normally resides in, making torture, both in the history of Turkey and in this specific novel, "an event without a referent." Throughout the novel, adjectives such as "absurd", "funny", "game-like", adjectives which are not usual to be employed about torture, are scattered here and there. This great awe before an event without a referent is most visibly, and in fact banally, seen when the protagonist thinks to himself upon being given a number in the prison: "like in the concentration camps." The event is thus carried to extremes from the very beginning, even before the event of torture, implicating that the experience overflows from the protagonist's perception.

When we consider torture as an event without a referent in the eyes of the prisoner, the abovementioned immediate opposition between "primitive" and "civilized" becomes more scrutable. As addressed in the previous chapter, the distance between the torturer and the prisoner is always already colossal. The protagonist, however, strives throughout the novel to widen this distance as a way of maintaining his "humanity", his "enlightened being" as

trademarks of "civilization." After naming the torturers with sentences such as "this weird creature", or "epitome of primitivity", this distance is taken to one of its most insipid form when the protagonist, being tortured, calls it a "sacred hunting ceremony":

> The monotone sounds of the sticks are amplified in your head like the sounds of a tom-tom. It is like a sacred hunting ceremony. Thrown, you are surrounded by stern flames. Among these primitive people, jumping around you in *a primitive evaporation of faith, wishing to melt into disappearance*…[89]

The simile of a primitive ceremony hints at the inexpressibility of the event. Representation as an expressive practice, the attempt of language to portray the event, fall short: What would "evaporation of faith" mean? Why would those who are faithful would wish to "melt into disappearance"? Devoid of any sense, these statements illustrate how not only regular speech, but also figurative, metaphoric speech is mostly incapable of conveying the pain of torture: The pain resists representation. While on the one hand the prisoner's greatest effort is to maintain his human dignity while being tortured, he is on the other hand sent back to a state anterior to speech, where only groans and whimpers are possible: Any attempt to describe the pain is destined to fail. "It would be totally senseless to try and describe here the pain that was inflicted upon me," writes the philosopher and Holocaust survivor Jean Améry. "[…] One comparison would only stand for the other, and in the end, we would be hoaxed by turn on the hopeless merry-go-round of figurative speech. The pain was what it was. Beyond that there is nothing to say."[90] On the other hand, though, it is only the figurative speech, the imaginative mode of communicating the opposition of "primitive-civilized", that makes it possible to make sense of the moment of torture. A couple of pages later, the metaphor of "primitive ceremony" turns into something more:

> He is hitting in furore. With a sexual desire. Like a huge wild animal. Just like a hungry animal jumping on its prey to tear

[89] Erdal Öz, *Yaralısın* [You are Wounded] (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2019) 186.
[90] Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits,* 33.

> it into pieces. An animal ready to get its grisly sharp teeth into the flesh of its prey, so that it can right away reach the taste of blood in its head.[91]

The distance between the self and the other –the tortured and the torturer– is here at its sharpest. The creation of this massive distance by the prisoner emanates from the intense feeling of disgust, which eventually turns into an affective condition that enables him to ease his bodily pain. At the end of this scene, the prisoner tells himself: "No more you feel the pain. You are far beyond pain."[92] Hence, the paragraph not only conveys the fury of the prisoner and is, as it were, the ultimate opposition to be established –wild animal vs. civilized man–, it also conveys the intensity of multifaceted affects that are incited and amplified between the two bodies in relation. Being able to be affected only by the body immediately in front him, and not by the situation as a whole –his political belief, his comrades, or the order itself that justifies torture–, the prisoner utters his last scream in disgust with the purpose of maintaining his human dignity. Since he is not able to take any other action, he is able to cling to his dignity only by positioning himself at the furthest point from the torturer, that is to say, by animalizing him.

However, the protagonist is not always in aggressive feelings towards the torturer. As it has been addressed by Ruth Leys, it is often observed that the victim at times has "warm feelings" towards the perpetrator as a defense mechanism, whence the survivor guilt partially comes from.[93] The protagonist's attempt to widen the gap between himself and the torturer as we have been discussing thus far carries, in a way, the purpose of not yielding to an identification of this sort. However, as his resilience becomes increasingly undermined, he cannot but assent to the "fatherly" voice of the torturer while he is being taken to the torture

[91] *Yaralısın*, 190.
[92] *Yaralısın*, 191.
[93] Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) 2.

chamber. On the way, the fatherly figure repeats the sentence, "C'mon my child", adding comforting phrases such as "Don't you ever be afraid, my child", "Don't you ever speak", "Don't dissolve, my child", "Shout as loud as you can, it would relieve you."[94] Even though the reader is made to think for a while that this could be a dream, an inner representation of a loving figure which would indicate a secure attachment, we soon understand that this voice belongs to the torturer and it actually says: "Speak, you bastard!"[95] At the moment of nearly total collapse, a regressive identification with the aggressor and the resulting "warm feelings" seem unavoidable.

The similes that I have addressed so far have another role than widening the gap between the tortured and the torturer. Being at the absolute mercy of the torturer and reduced to a mere body, the prisoner needs a sense of sublimation to help him ease the pain, and more importantly, to resist the pain of torture so as to resist betrayal. The sublimation of the moment bestows the character with means, however awry, to narrate. Otherwise, without the sublime element, it would become entirely impossible to convey bodily pain. We could employ the adjective "awry" in double sense here: While the narration is inclined to one side, to the distinction between primitive and civilized, it is also amiss in that the similes are far from being structured by means of a competent imaginative reconstruction. Physical pain here, as everywhere else, is not *beyond* language; it is *outside* language.[96] To overcome this inaccessibility, the author "bends the sentence into a particular shape", resulting in a narrative that is essentially restricted by the micro-syntax of these sentences.[97]

Even though the character never calls himself "civilized", we understand that, for him, "dexterity in grasping the simple truth" is a sign of civilization amongst the "animal-like" torturers. Besides the torturers, the character distinguishes himself also from the rest of the

[94] *Yaralısın*, 184-185
[95] *Ibid*, 187.
[96] Elaine Scarry, *Resisting Representation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 3.
[97] *Ibid*, 3.

prisoners who write "primitive poems in the credulity of a seven-year-old kid."[98] The equation between the prisoner's brutality and the criminal prisoners' assumed credulity hints at the possibility that, while it is a way of creating a colossal distance between himself and his prison environment, the insistence on primitivity is also a part of the sublimation that the protagonist resorts to while being tortured. In other words, while on the one hand sublimation is a way of resisting physical pain, it is also a way of disjoining oneself from the others in an attempt to preserve one's identity that is slowly breaking apart. Even though the protagonist attempts to disjoin himself, an attempt that traverses the whole narrative since every prisoner has – somewhat supernaturally– the same name (Nuri), the self is already doubled from the beginning and throughout the narrative, as the use of second person singular further indicates. During his first encounter with the torturers, the protagonist says: "The second person inside you ceaselessly asks: 'Will I be able to do it?'"[99] Just before this question, he says:

> You do not want to get smashed. *No evil shall come to you.* You crave for that. […] You should not give in. You should not be someone who crawls, hustles, begs like dogs. Will you be able to do it? You have no experience. And this is the worst. You are dying with the desire to resist all the evil, all the bodily pain that is to come, but you are filled with fear. You do not want your fear to turn into cowardice.[100]

During this first encounter with the knowledge that evil and bodily pain will *happen* to his body, the protagonist's self-doubt, something that always accompanies torture, is heightened with the fear of losing his dignity. When taken as two parts, before and after the sentence of self-doubt "Will you be able to do it?", we see in this paragraph an encounter with the protagonist's fear of his own "cowardice", his own "primitivity", and an attempt to rationalize his fear in order to keep his identity intact. But the intensity of the protagonist's self-doubt already overtakes his strength: The only way to cope with the evil to come is that

[98] *Yaralısın*, 200.
[99] *Ibid*, 92.
[100] *Ibid*, 90.

"no evil shall come." The fear, the self-doubt that encapsulates his being could only get intensified with torture. The fearful encounter with his own body, and the bodies of the torturers and the other prisoners, with "this new world" as the protagonist puts it, results in his resemblance to his environment: He resembles to all that is "primitive." No more able to preserve the boundaries of his self through a distinction between civilization and primitivity, the protagonist makes a spurt of effort to create another distinction. Looking at the shaved heads of the prisoners, he thinks to himself: "There should be a specific meaning of making people so ugly. Maybe it is a way of keeping oppression fresh, of making people forget it."[101] Having lost his formerly defined identity, he nevertheless does not call himself "primitive" but trying to make sense of his new condition by qualifying it "ugly." Looking at the mirror:

> This is you. A hideous face. Your head is striped and red. Your eyes swelled. Your face greasy. Two big bruises. Meaningless. Ugly. Your face does not fit the mirror. […] You are like a scabby dog with feathers partly teared out.[102]

The encounter with the "new world", rather than being a "blow" on the tissue of the identity, breaks apart the protagonist's sense of self through systemic torture. Even though the narrative is shaped by the protagonist's ceaseless effort to dissociate himself from the torturers, that he ultimately resembles to the rest of prisoners indicates that his identification is now distorted. At the end of the novel, when one prisoner asks the protagonist his name, he answers: "Nuri."[103] As we have noted earlier, for the protagonist, the prisoners are just as primitive as the torturers themselves. Thus, throughout the novel, despite all the effort of the protagonist, he eventually cannot but yield to a distorted identification with the perpetrator as a result of being stripped off all his previous political beliefs and engagement through systemic violence.

[101] *Ibid*, 244-245.
[102] *Ibid*, 245-246.
[103] *Ibid*, 247.

Trauma Memory and Guilt in *Şafak*

The identification with the perpetrator resulting from a traumatic event is not always overtly visible. "A melancholy politics," states Max Pensky, "[…] glides into a secret, half-willing collaboration with the forces it seeks to oppose."[104] The hinderance of mourning after a traumatic event which results in, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, a perennial loop of melancholy thus produces subjects whose capacity to sustain their political identifications is too distorted to maintain the distance between themselves and the oppressors. What is more, since a melancholy state paves the way to self-loathing and self-incriminating thoughts, a severe criticism against oneself, especially when the subject's intellectual capacity is competent enough to be aware of this distortion, becomes unavoidable. In Sevgi Soysal's *Şafak*, we see exactly this melancholic criticism that indicates a hardline rupture in the characters' sense of self.

Şafak [Dawn] opens with the scene of police raid on a house where eight people from different social and political backgrounds are having dinner, continues with three of them being taken in custody at the police headquarters, and concludes with them being released at *dawn* after long interrogations. While three of these characters are not part of any political movement, the rest represent different political stances – a nationalist, a lawyer, an old working-class man, a leftist intellectual woman, and a young revolutionary man who has just been released from prison. In the midst of these characterizations, the reader gets to know in great detail the inner conflicts of the intellectual woman (Oya) and the revolutionary man (Mustafa), who become engaged in a ceaseless interrogation of their personalities and political beliefs as a result of the police raid that we can safely consider as a *blow* on their selves. This traumatic blow on the safe boundaries of the self distorts the meaning that the characters had previously given to their

[104] Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) 11.

political engagement, and the new situation forces them to find new meanings, drifting them to a harsh questioning through the evocation of their traumatic memories pertaining to torture and other violent encounters. Throughout the narrative, thus, the interrogation takes place both in the police headquarters and inside the minds of the two protagonists: "It was not only the house that was raided. With the opening of the door, the hidden crimes, emotions, and thoughts were spread all over as if gross, filthy intestines."[105] A nervous apprehension takes hold of Mustafa at the moment of the raid:

> Mustafa straightened up by the voice of Abdullah, shouting 'You!' He took a step forward, then stopped. 'Where am I going?' He was surprised by the fact that he was ready to go right at the moment he's called. He remembered the first raid, the first time he was taken. He had been ready to go, back then too. He must be considering himself guilty, even though he did not commit any crime. […] What does that mean? Not espousing the committed action, not fully adopting your belief. One who makes a true decision does not consider himself guilty even for a moment. […] Now he could understand better the reason why he was dissolved in that place, that place he was taken with his eyes covered, where they treated them inhumanely. The reason was that his physical strength was drained away; but also, it was the defeatism generated by his subconscious sense of guilt. What came after was the lack of faith in the movement. No, people like me haven't been able to go beyond the concepts, the world view that has been inflicted upon our brains. We think we go beyond it when we are on flat ground. But when the ground becomes uneven, we dissolve and unite with those who accuse us.[106]

The raid unearths Mustafa's discomforting memories of torture. While Mustafa does not relive the moment of torture in flashbacks, he is nevertheless reminded of the sense of guilt that is ingrained in him by way of torture. More precisely, Mustafa displays the dialectic of melancholy: While the raid does not fully evoke the brutal moments of torture, it nevertheless bestows him with an insight into the emotions that had been evoked by the moment of first raid and the subsequent torture. As a revolutionary man, he has the capacity to intellectualize his conditions, yet the memories of torturous guilt undermine his resilience, thus making him have a recourse to a passive, submissive manner. This is precisely the moral challenge that torture

[105] Sevgi Soysal, *Şafak* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018) 57.
[106] *Şafak*, 66.

poses to its victims: One must use one's own will against oneself in acts of collusion and betrayal, resulting in an imperishable sense of guilt. Before being presented to this perennial sense of guilt, the reader sees how Mustafa's sense of self had been shattered by systemic torture. On the day he was released after fourteen months in prison, Mustafa is taking a stroll in İstanbul:

> Long afterwards, he realized that he was murmuring the songs they sang [in prison] together [other prisoners]. Just like when hitching. Those days when he paced back and forth in order not to think, to add dimensions to a vicious circle; not to waver in the midst of monotonous days and repetitions; to possessively and carefully preserve the richness inside the ill-treated, disregarded shell of his own. […] Now there were no walls around him. Now he could protrude, stretch, thrust himself forward. But how? What is it that he struggled to preserve, to keep alive in the face of oppression for full fourteen months? What is it that left him stumbled when they said: 'Now you are free'?"[107]

The long and systemic act of torture, resulted in the dissolvement of the character as touched upon above, had generated a great loss to the extent that Mustafa is no more able to make sense of his freedom. A traumatic loss, a loss that is brought about by a historical disaster, always enforces the subject's effort to make sense of the events: The subject needs to make sense of the loss. What is lost here is first and foremost the sense of self. Barely self-contained, the loss of sense of self brings about the loss of the capacity to articulate the loss: The character can now only murmur a distant song as a remnant from the days of long interrogations and torture. Additionally, the capacity to mourn is also taken away from him, since now he does not know, even though he is aware of a loss in the sense of self, what he has lost with it. These losses, besides being a part of the loss of the sense of self, are also related to the loss of the possibility of bearing witness: Without knowing what is lost and how to articulate this loss, the

[107] *Ibid*, 22-23.

character is not able to interpret the events, which is why he is at all times in search of a meaning. Towards the middle of the novel, we see Mustafa's heightened effort to make sense:

> With the most absurd habit of most intellectuals, he is giving a struggle to find a reason for the unreasonable. Until now, he ceaselessly tried to understand why he was taken here. […] Even though had had done nothing. Mustafa detects the senselessness of "doing nothing." As though, in such times, what is important is the quality of the crime. Seems we are made to believe in our guiltiness. As though doing something is a guilt. As though doing nothing is innocence. When did we begin to think that fighting is a guilt, and doing nothing is innocence? He felt suffocated. Is he weakening?[108]

While the character is giving a great effort to make sense, his heightened self-awareness allows him to "detect the senselessness" of his own thoughts. From a different angle, though, this senselessness could be interpreted as the character's inability, as a result of his shattered sense of self and previous attachments, to think outside historical and political explanations. These latter could do nothing but maintain the victim's position as victim. Accordingly, the only sense that the character is capable of finding in his circumstances is that he is the victim of the perpetrator's perspective imposed on him by means of torture. The struggle that Mustafa gives in this passage is, in a way, the struggle against identification with the torturer, whence the feeling of weakness comes from. He perpetuates this struggle, both against the policemen during his custody and against his memories of torture, by way of constant rationalization. For example, when offered a cigarette by the police officer, Mustafa remembers that this was a "trap" he previously fell for: "Smoking is reconciliation. A moment of reconciliation chosen by the enemy. Mustafa does not intend to fall for it. He knows the play of threating first good, then bad. He has experience in it."[109] Following this scene, Mustafa engages in a long analysis of this technique. Mustafa, unlike the protagonist of *Yaralısın* who yields to the "fatherly" voice of the torturer, is thus highly aware of his circumstances. This awareness and the accompanying

[108] *Ibid*, 125.
[109] *Ibid,* 126.

struggle, however, always fail, as a result of which the concepts that would have served a less incriminating purpose if taken politically, such as liberty and guilt, turn into morally castigating ones. This is because, since under the conditions of abject powerlessness during torture the incorporated aggression cannot be projected into the aggressor, "the violence is turned back against the victim who experiences it in the form of a self-lacerating conscience."[110]

Oya, another main character of the novel, is not a victim of torture, yet still she has a similar conscience marked with fraudulence against the backdrop of her old habits that she calls "petty bourgeois." Yielding to an inner conflict, Oya sways between her discordant revolutionary responsibility and personal identity. Rather than defending herself, as Mustafa does, by thinking that she had done nothing, she is immersed in shame resulting from her self-assessment. The moment of raid educes her past, stripping her from the present conditions, and making her hearken back to her past that evokes shame. First and foremost, Oya castigates herself as someone who is "habituated to beauty":

> As it happens very often in recent years, Oya is once more stupefied by the ugly face of reality. It is not, in fact, about the reality being ugly or beautiful; she is aware that reality cannot be qualified by these terms. It is just the incapacity of her as a person who is rather habituated to beauty, or, to be more precise, who is grown in the midst of a strange concept of beauty, to stop tempting to distinguish beauty by covering one eye. Or: What stupefies her is the deep-rooted cowardice of her personality; ready for any bold enterprise for the things she finds beautiful, bold just because boldness is beautiful, lacking the necessary courage to confront the reality which can at times be ugly. After all those tests she had to go through, this is how Oya was to explain the fear she felt when the door was opened.[111]

Although Oya herself was not tortured, the moment of raid evokes her memories of the time she had spent in prison, where she had witnessed torture, and these memories come back to her in the form of shame about his personality. During her time in custody, when the police officer leaves a truncheon on the table, Oya recalls the time when another female prisoner had

[110] *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*, 5.
[111] *Şafak*, 18.

told her about how, during torture, she had been raped with a truncheon. She answers to the prisoner: "Forget about it. […] They filled that tool with their own ugliness, but the ugliness stays with the hands holding the truncheon. It did not come to you. […]"[112] Right after these statements, she says: "[Oya understands that] she is a spectator lightly wounded with a stray bullet. […] It is a profound shame, hard to overcome." Oya's severe self-criticism that is initiated by her traumatic memories evoke by the raid, thus, emanates from what can arguably be called survivor guilt: Amongst all those prisoners who were exposed to "ugliness", she was a "well-to-do intellectual" who "could not go beyond being surprised and shamed." Reckoning with Ruth Leys' argument that survivor guilt lays at the bottom of collaboration with the perpetrator, we can, somewhat safely, claim that Oya tends towards such a collaboration in moral terms.

This subconscious tendency presents itself overtly when Oya, being interrogated by a policeman, tries to prove her innocence by shielding behind a morality that is conform to that of the perpetrator. The first question of the policeman is whether Oya is married with children. Carrying the purpose of taunting Oya by the idea that her life as, on the one hand, a mother and a wife and, on the other, as a leftist intellectual, is discordant with the perpetrator's morality, the question renders Oya guilty in moral terms. When she is asked: "How can you explain, miss, that you as a married woman with children were drinking with strange men?", she answers: "I was not drinking."[113] Following this, Oya drifts anew to an inner interrogation as her answer is an attempt to defend herself within the limits the perpetrator's morality, and she thinks: "How ironic that I defend, try to whitewash myself!"[114] Despite this realization, when the policeman asks: "What were you doing with all these men?", she answers: "There were

[112] *Ibid*, 95.
[113] *Ibid*, 76.
[114] *Ibid*, 76.

women as well."[115] By trying to maintain her position of a good subject while being interrogated, Oya in fact shores up a latent identification with the perpetrator's morality.

The three characters' reactions to violence that surrounds them in these two novels portray a laborious endeavour to resist, besides betrayal, a regressive identification with the perpetrator. Nevertheless, since their psychic functions are too disintegrated as a result of their traumatic encounter with torture, this endeavour, in both novels, is doomed to fail. The endless effort of the nameless character of *Yaralısın* to widen the already colossal distance between himself and the torturer; Mustafa's struggle to give a meaning to his sense of loss and his inner conflict with his self-loathing conscience that tells him that he "unites with those who accuse"; and, as a female intellectual, Oya's latent obeisance to the perpetrator's morality and her evasion of the political only to yield to a sense of guilt in moral terms: The analysis of these characterizations offers us something more than what the official accounts of the events or other types of testimonies can present. Through a literary analysis from the perspective of trauma, we are able to gain an insight not only into the extent to which the individualities of these characters are shattered, but also into the complex mental states that the military coup had generated within socialist circles. More precisely, as we have seen in our analysis, a resistance to identification with the perpetrator traverses the narrative, though mostly in very latent ways, and this resistance is arguably one of the most unnerving elements, as it hinders a potent struggle, leading to the constant decline of an effective socialist politics in Turkey.

[115] *Ibid*, 76.

Conclusion

One of the many reasons why literary works are important for historical analysis is that they reflect the ways in which certain class of people at a given time set forth their agency in relation to the events unfolding around them. During the times of social unrest and catastrophic events, literary agency is closely tied to the commitment to bear witness, to the authorial resolution to convey the trauma that these events entail, to represent them so as to call upon the therapeutic value of literary narration. Undoubtedly, this agency is not without problems. The authorial commitment to witness often clashes with the unrepresentability of the event. More precisely, while the author is aware that neither silence nor discursivity are good options, s/he nevertheless, encountered with a subject that resists representation, bends and shapes the sentences into a certain direction. The consequence is a narrative which eventually, rather than talking about the event itself, is determined by this resistance.

In my analysis of two literary works that bear witness to the March 12 coup, and to the events before and after it, I have illustrated that the narrative act is crucially dependent on the symptoms of trauma catalysed by these events. In my attempt to explore an alternative answer to the question of why did the March 12 coup produce its own genuine literature whereas September 12 coup did not, I have demonstrated the ways in which the unprecedent severity of the state violence during March 12 overflowed the usual perception of authors. An event that is historically impossible, the March 12 coup could be narrated only through literature. It is important at this point to note that the theoretical underpinnings of my analysis may not always perfectly correspond to the complexities of literary narrative, let alone to a narrative that sets out to represent the unrepresentable. In a further study, thus, one would benefit from approaching these literary testimonies from a more deconstructive point of view, letting the texts speak for themselves where necessary.

Even though the scope of this thesis allows to include only a limited number of case examples, this work could be considered as a first step towards a genealogy of literary testimonials to historical catastrophes in Turkey. In this sense, it could be furthered in two ways. First, the inclusion of more works from the same period would allow us to further explore the continuities and ruptures in literary characters' reactions to the same events, especially to torture, endowing us with the chance to better grasp the social relevance of these reactions. Second, a comparison between the March 12 novels and those that are produced after the September 12 coup would permit an in-depth understanding of the severity of the traumatic impact of these two events. A comparison of this sort would also endow us with an insight into how the socialists, especially the literary left, of a country coped with the left-wing melancholy that took up the reins in mid-1970s.

This work is also a contribution to the growing body of work on literary testimonials to historical catastrophes. In this sense, it could also be furthered through a global comparison. Literary testimonials to military coups, narrating the often traumatic outcomes for socialist circles, are ample in countries such as Argentine, Chile, or Greece. A specific focus on the literatures of such countries where military coup, like in Turkey, has become a tradition would bestow the historian with a profound insight on historicizing the civil-military relations in these countries, and more specifically, on understanding the role that literary left assumes in this relation.

Without a doubt, literary testimonials are the products of a commitment to witness and to narrate traumatic events. At the bottom of this commitment lies a responsibility, both political and artistic. But also, it is a responsibility of the individual in the face of history. In this sense, a closer look at the literary narration of historical disasters offers the historian a peculiar understanding of the extent to which survivors of an atrocity are stripped of their integrated psychic capabilities. Each time a literary testimony is analyzed, as stated in the very

beginning of this thesis, a new contribution is made to the exploration of the ethical relationship between history and individual.

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