

EXPERIENCE OF SEPTEMBER 12 COUP D'ETAT  
IN TURKISH NOVELS OF THE 1980s

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Title: Experience of September 12 Coup D'état in Turkish Novels of 1980s

This study scrutinizes the September 12 literature written just after the September 12 coup d'état, that is to say in 1980s. How the coup affected to the literature both its form and content; how the coup experienced by the authors and how the coup is represented within the novels in 1980s are the basic questions of this study. For this purpose, this study examines the September 12 novels, including to its field both the works of the canonized authors and the prison literature. Main focus of this study is the prison literature of 1980s which is considered as both a resistance space and as a representative of the hegemonic mentality of the period. It is suggested that the exclusion of the prison literature from the literary history is the representation of the exclusion of the prisoners from the politics and the public sphere. This study examines both the canonized literature of September 12 and the prison literature to analyze the entire atmosphere of the 1980s which was shaped by the military take over.

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Başlık: 80'li Yılların Türk Romanlarında 12 Eylül Deneyimi

Bu çalışma boyunca 1980'lerdeki yani hemen 12 Eylül darbesi ertesinde yazılan ve darbeye odaklanan edebiyat incelenmektedir. 12 Eylül darbesi, edebiyatı biçim ve içerik bakımından nasıl etkilediği, yazarların darbeyi nasıl deneyimledikleri ve darbenin edebiyatta nasıl temsil edildiği bu çalışmanın temel sorularıdır. Bu soruların ışığında, bu çalışmada hapishane edebiyatı da çalışmaya dahil edilerek, 80'li yıllar boyunca yazılmış 12 Eylül romanları incelenmektedir. Odak noktasını 80'li yıllardaki hapishane edebiyatının oluşturduğu bu çalışmada, hapishane edebiyatı hem bir direniş alanı olarak, hem de dönemin egemen zihniyetinin ve tavrının tezahürlerini görebileceğimiz bir yazma deneyimi olarak incelenmiştir. Hapishane edebiyatının edebiyat tarihinden dışlanması, 12 Eylül mahkumlarının siyasetten ve kamusal alandan da dışlanması bir sonucu olduğu savunulmuştur. Çalışma boyunca 12 Eylül sonrasında darbeye şekillenmiş kültürel atmosferin bütünlüklü bir haritasını çıkarabilmek amacıyla, hem kanonize olmuş yazarların hem de hapishane edebiyatı yazarlarının eserleri birlikte incelenmiştir.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The September 12, 1980 coup d'état is accepted as a turning point in Turkey's history. September 12 is depicted as a reference point which dichotomizes Turkey's political, economic, social, and cultural history into before September 12 and after September 12. Why and how 1980 is accepted as a turning point is not the subject matter of this thesis. This is an attempt to analyze the literary atmosphere of 1980s, taking into account the social, economic and political changes and transformations during the period. It also seeks the representations of the atmosphere in the literary works of the decade including all kinds of literary experiences to the literary space of 80s.

What is the meaning of trying to evaluate a period looking into an artistic field such as literature? Is there any political and social significance of the arts? These are important questions that should be kept in mind for also such a study; however, it would be inadequate in scope now to cover an analysis which contains the deeper relations between society, culture, politics, language, and arts at all. Since this work takes into account a political act which deeply influenced the society, culture, and daily politics, it also becomes an attempt to express all the relations among politics, history and literature. Questioning the relations between literature and politics, such a study accepts the relation between them as a given relation. Additionally, in this study it is believed that there is a strict relationship between literature and the politics; in addition to this, literature is not free from politics. On the contrary, it is determined by historical facts and politics.

In this study my aim is to consider the representations of the political and economic atmosphere of the 1980s by looking the literature of the period. What distinguishes this study from the literary evaluations about the period is its inclusion of all kinds of literary experiences into its research field. Thus, this study reestablishes the literary history by reading the literature of the unseen, people who were exiled from not only the literary space but also the political and public space, that is to say, the prisoners of the September 12 coup. The reason for including both the prison literature of the 1980s and the high literature<sup>1</sup> of the period is to get the whole picture of the period, to analyze the effects and experience of September 12 coup. With the help of the works of authors both of the high literature and the prison literature, it is possible to see the representation of the mentality of the period. It also helps to examine the different ideological spaces, their conflicts, overlap, their strict relationship with the junta and interaction with the changing social, economic and political structure of the day.

Throughout this study, it is suggested that the prison literature widened the literary space and included different experiences into its field; thus these experiences found a literary body made seen the conflicting ideologies, and the period's dominant ideology. This kind of a study explicates how the dominant ideology dominated the culture and narrowed negotiation space of culture.

It is also suggested that the belief that literature became distanced from politics after September 12 is a product of the dominant ideology of the period in a sense. Since if the quality of the literary production of the day is examined even canonized writers and authors wrote their experiences of the September 12 military takeover such as Latife Tekin, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Bilge Karasu or Aziz Nesin.

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<sup>1</sup> With high literature it is implied that the literature which is engaged with the market; which has the chance to be distributed, and a literature which is evaluated as "literary."

Additionally, the prison literature of the 1980s is proof of a literature which is engaged in the politics.

In this study, inspired by Bourdieu, it is asserted the literary taste has categorized, classified, and thus excluded the products of the prison literature for not being literary and evaluated them as not being literature since the authors were not the “pure” authors and literary men. Those prisoners were seen as a part of marginalized politics and omitted from both the politics and put into prison, besides they were also excluded from the public space. For this reason, their literature is excluded also.

The following parts are for questioning and analyzing the relationship between literature and politics, and literature and history to introduce the role of the literature within the disciplines such as politics and history. It is to underline the negotiative characteristic of literature, and to set a theoretical framework for analyzing the literary experience of the 1980s. For this purpose, first, it will focus on literatures’ relationship between politics and history, and second, the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s which was shaped by the coup d’état and dominant ideology. In addition to this, there will be a survey of literature of the 1980s to see what kind of a literary production dominated the period. After that, it will focus on the coup d’état literature after March 12 coup, and September 12 coup literature will be analyzed comparing it with the March 12 literature, since their themes are similar, but the approach to these themes differs.

Lastly, it will be examined that how September 12 was experienced and how it was reflected in literary works and how it affected the literature in this chapter. Some of the literary works of the period, specifically novels will be analyzed within the second and third chapter. In the second chapter, two of the canonized literary

works of the period will be scrutinized. Latife Tekin's *Night Lessons* and Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Non* are significant examples of September 12 literature of this period, since they try to analyze the period, and questions the military take over and its effects on the society and individual, its effects in the streets, in the politics. Ağaoğlu and Tekin shows us the effects of the coup in the outside, and third chapter's imprisoned authors Hüseyin Şimşek and Kadir Konuk depicts us the life inside the prison's walls. The coup d'état caused crisis in both individual and social sense. Both literatures present us a possibility to see how the coup was experienced in the streets, in the universities, in the prisons and in the families.

#### Literature, Politics and History

Since I attempt to analyze the relations between a historical period's political events and the literature of the day, focusing on the novels, such a study necessitates taking a look at the genre of political novel. However, examining the novels under the title of a genre which provides an easier classification and frame for analyzing the works is not always helpful and may be restrictive in a sense. Although I use the term "coup novels" to describe the context and the determining point of the novels, I am not interested in the genre as a problem within the framework of this study. I am of the opinion, like Marxist critics such as Eagleton, that any kind of literary piece is political and determined by the ideology of the writer or the period in which it is produced. Although this attempt may seem like a rough Marxist evaluation of the literature of the 1980s at first sight, it is more like a simple problematization of the relationship between a certain history, politics and literature. With the help of analyzing this relationship, there is a possibility to see the representations of the actual social relations and structure in their natural settings in the novels.

To start with a basic question, what literature corresponds to in life both opens a world of details and representations, and paves the way for certain kinds of relationships of political imaginations. In both spheres, literature and politics are in equilibrium in the sense that they are the subject of conflicts and differences. As Sibel Irzık puts it,

Art and politics are very similar since, both of them have to fight with the paradoxes of representations. (...) [M]ay be it is the ability of the literature to stage the paradoxes of the representations, to be able to represent the representations which makes literature special and indispensable both for the politics and the life.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing literature and politics, Sibel Irzık makes visible the thin line between literature, politics and life. The ability to represent the representations of life is naturally hidden within the lines; the work of literature is naturally a representative of politics. Moreover, literature is a negotiation of words, and the idea formed by these words; it is a compound of possibilities, choices, representations, imaginations and ideas. It is different from what Stendhal said two centuries ago: “Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one’s attention.”<sup>3</sup> It is certainly true for the politics in a literary work having no possibility of not attracting one’s attention; however, it is not vulgar and loud if and since politics is intrinsic to the literature.

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<sup>2</sup> Sibel Irzık, “Orhan Pamuk’ta Temsil ve Siyaset.” In Orhan Pamuk’un Edebi Dünyası. Edited by Nüket Esen, Engin Kılıç (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008), pp. 52-3. “Siyasetle sanat sürekli olarak temsilin paradokslarıyla boğuşmak zorunda oldukları için birbirlerine benziyorlar. (...)Belki de edebiyatı özel yapan, hem hayat hem de siyaset için vazgeçilmez kılan, temsilin paradokslarını sahneleme yeteneği, temsili temsil edebilmesidir.”

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Gordon Milne, *The American Political Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p.12.

We must be aware that any expression has a referent that is political, because any work is the product of the culture, and the hierarchical systems within the society in which they are produced. Broadly speaking, literature is a product of the writer and the social and political environment in which it is produced. Moreover, as Eagleton puts it, literature is a part of history of politics and ideology, which also provides a perspective when looking at the social history.<sup>4</sup> He also asserts that literature is very much related to the political system in which it is produced; it sometimes confirms, keeps alive, reconstructs or deconstructs the political system of its period with a good or bad grace.<sup>5</sup> In another work, he makes a similar evaluation. Art is a part of the ideology of the society, in other words, it is a part of this complex system of understanding which makes society perceive the hegemony of a social class on other classes as natural; thus to understand literature means understanding the social process in which it is composed.<sup>6</sup>

What Irzık asserts is not different; it is the ability to represent the representations of literature. Since literary works represent the world view and the understanding of their periods, they are very much related to the dominant “social mentality” or ideology of the period.<sup>7</sup> The social mentality constitutes the writer; the work is shaped within the mentality or as Eagleton calls it, the ideology of its period. The mentality of the period is reflected not only in the content, but also it is settled in the style of the work. According to Georg Lukacs, the style is the reflector of the

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<sup>4</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Edebiyat Kuramı: Giriş* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2004), p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>6</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Edebiyat Eleştirisi Üzerine* (İstanbul: Eleştiri Yayınevi, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

mentality of the period in which the work of literature is formed.<sup>8</sup> Thus analyzing the works of literature gives a tool to see the social, cultural, historical and political context of the time the work is shaped.

Eagleton asserts that comprehending these works means to grasp the indirect and interlaced connections and relations of the ideological circles of in which the work of literature is composed. This network of ideology is as Lukacs claims hidden in the style and it is available for Eagleton also. He seeks these connections within the themes, in the style and in the structure of language; it is nested in the imagery, in the texture of the work.<sup>9</sup> As many times emphasized in Eagleton's works, ideology is composed of a certain kind of understanding of history and the class structure of the society. Thus to understand ideology is possible by apprehending the relations among the different classes of society and the production modes in which they occur.<sup>10</sup>

To have the information of the relations among the revolutionaries, and its relation with the working class and petit bourgeoisie provides a possibility to grasp the mentality of the period, namely the 1980s. Why I am studying both the prison literature and the works of high literature is to get the information of a period, it is to see the reflection and representation of a period's hegemonic ideology as a whole. To get the whole picture of the 1980s, there is a need to see the different ideological spaces; their conflicts, their overlapping and, all in all, their sharp relation with the martial law and changing economic, social and cultural structure of Turkey.

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<sup>8</sup> Georg Lukacs, *Roman Kuramı* (İstanbul: Metis, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Eagleton, *Edebiyat Eleştirisi Üzerine*. pp.15-16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

Throughout this study, I assert that prison literature and the attempts of the publishing houses such as Belge Publications, widened the borders of literary production. Such experiences made literature a conflict space of the ideologies of the periods. In other words, literature makes these relations visible. It introduces and clarifies how the hegemonic mentality reflects the society and culture, how it classifies our choices and our tastes. It helps us to see how the possibility of imagining another world is taken away from us; moreover, it shows how we internalized the hegemonic ideologies of the period. Thus, it opens a door of possibilities of new representations, since it questions the descriptions of genres, style and language.

As I expressed above, for the reason that literature is also the space of representations of ideologies, inspired by Eagleton, one can certainly say, “History enters the text as ideology.”<sup>11</sup> History is visible in the text as the appearances of ideologies, since any ideological formation as Eagleton emphasized several times, is the product of certain concrete situations and events.

History, then, certainly ‘enters’ the text, (...) as a presence determined and distorted by its measurable absences. This is not to say that real history is present in the text but in disguised form, so that the task of the critic then to wrench the mask from its face. It is rather that history is ‘present’ in the text in the form of a *double- absence*.<sup>12</sup>

Thus history appears in the literary text as if it is not an element of the structure, as if it is not existent and available for the fictive world of the literature. History is represented in the text in another form, there are little pieces of it, some indications and representations of the real life; there is the mentality or the ideology

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<sup>11</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A study in Marxist Literary Theory*. (London: Verso, 1978), p. 72

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.72.

apparent in the setting, in the fiction or in the character formation which is consisted of and determined by the historical conditions of the period.

Literary and historiographical texts are thus 'ideological' in quite distinct senses. The literary text does not take history as its object, even when (as with 'historical' fiction) it believes itself to do so; but it does, nevertheless, have history as its object in the last instance, in ways apparent not to the text itself but to criticism. It is this distantiating of history, this absence of any particular historical 'real', which confers on literature its air of freedom; unlike the historiographical work, it seems liberated from the need to conform its meanings to the exigencies of the actual. However, this liberation is merely the other face of an internal necessity. The text, we may say, gives us certain socially determined representations of the real cut loose from any particular real conditions to which those representations refer.<sup>13</sup>

Literature thus gives the socially determined representations of the real world as Eagleton underlines. In addition to this, it is this distancing that makes the literature liberated; literature becomes a space of meanings not just as represented in the real world, not just as insisting historical realities. It gives a chance to get a panoramic view; it is the embodiment of historical actualities with the knowledge of literature. However, Eagleton notes that literature is not independent from history this much; it is rather an illusory freedom, since it is determined by historical facts.

History, one might say, is the *ultimate* signifier of literature, as it is the ultimate signified. For what else in the end could be the source and object of any signifying practice but the real social formation which provides its material matrix? The problem is not that such a claim is false, but that it leaves everything exactly as it was. For the text presents itself to us less as historical than as a sportive flight from history, a reversal and resistance of history, a momentarily liberated zone in which the exigencies of the real seem to evaporate, an enclave of freedom enclosed within the realm of necessity. We know that such freedom is largely illusory- that the text is *governed*; but it is not illusory merely in the sense of being a false perception of our own. The text's illusion of freedom is part of its very nature- an effect of its peculiarly *overdetermined* relation to historical reality.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.72.

The claim that literature was disjoined from history and politics after September 12 therefore does not ground a basis, for the reason that literature is not as independent from history as it seems. The change in style and language, the transition to the postmodern fiction of the Turkish novel in the 1980s cannot be explained just by the word “coincidence”; all conditions for this transformation are determined by the historical and political facts of the period. The literary text is a composition of the determinant historical, social, cultural and political conditions of the period, so any interpretation of the work should not neglect the ideological setting of the text that is historical actuality. Latife Tekin’s novels which have a ruptured structure and plot such as *Night Lessons* or Bilge Karasu’s novels structured by the paranoia and a deep hopelessness such as *Night* (Gece) are the best examples of such a change. Their textual structure and textual reality is shaped and determined by the historical facts in a sense.

The text is a tissue of meanings, perception and responses, which inhere in the first place in that imaginary production of the real which is ideology. The ‘textual real’ is related to the historical real, not as an imaginary transposition of it, but as the product of certain signifying practices whose source and referent is, in the last instance, history itself.<sup>15</sup>

Raymond Williams, who was the teacher of Eagleton, also underlines the importance of culture and society, which is interpreted and called ideology by Eagleton later. Culture is the product of the political and historical facts. If the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s is concerned, like the literary texts of the day, this atmosphere can be interpreted as the direct reflection of the post coup era with the television commercials, its popular images like Bülent Ersoy, Ahmet Kaya or Ayhan Songar, and with its new perception of politics and life style which bodified with

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.75.

Turgut Özal. All of these popular images of the day are determined in away by the dominant ideology; it is shaped by the military regime. Essentially, Eagleton and Williams both agree on the determining effect of the historical realities and the dominant mentalities of the period, which includes the social relations and culture.

If we are looking for the relations between literature and society, we cannot either separate out this one practice from a formed body of other practices, nor when we have identified a particular practice can we give it a uniform, static and ahistorical relation to some abstract social formation. The arts of writing and the arts of creation and performance, over their whole range, are parts of the cultural process in all the different ways, the different sectors, that I have been seeking to describe. They contribute to the effective dominant culture and are a central articulation of it.<sup>16</sup>

Any appreciation of literary works as Eagleton's theory indicates thus is determined by the dominant ideology, which includes some works to the literary space while it excludes some works for the same reason as it can be seen explicitly if September 12 literature is concerned. Prison literature is excluded from the literary history as a result of its authors and writers were excluded from the society, politics and public sphere.

Like Eagleton, French cultural historian and theoretician Pierre Bourdieu, who feeds on Marxism, underlines this exclusion/inclusion issue, with his own vocabulary, as the classification of the tastes. His special emphasis is on the cultural system of societies. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu analyses the cultural atmosphere of France and he examines how taste classifies, includes, and excludes some works, peoples, and habits. According to Bourdieu, appreciating the works within this cultural system is due to taste:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in

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<sup>16</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism*. (London: Verso, 2005), p. 45.

which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.<sup>17</sup>

Bourdieu's distinction is important to understanding how and why the prison literature of the 1980s was exiled from the literary space and literary history. Since the imprisoned were seen as on the margins of society by the hegemonic ideology, and since they were "adventurous and dreamer anarchists" rather than writers in the eyes of the literary circle of this decade, their literary experience of September 12 was excluded. Their works of literature was excluded for the reason that they were "bad" literary examples, not having any literary significance. These works were evaluated with the literary taste of the "high" literature. In a way, this taste of literature was influential when the novels, stories, and poems of the prisoners were concerned, thus it shows us how the dominant ideology or the mentality of the period determined the taste itself. Moreover, with their works it became clear how the social status of the literary man helps construct the literary value of works.

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile- in, a word, natural-enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.<sup>18</sup>

As discussed in the previous pages, literature helps us to handle those kinds of distinctions throughout society and within history. Classifications of the period show us the conflicting spaces of ideologies; they make us aware of the power relations in society. If the cultural consumption of the period is concerned, the popular images of 1980s had a function for underlining the social differences. For

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<sup>17</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. (London: Routledge, 1986), p.6

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.7.

instance, Ahmet Kaya has significance for such an evaluation. The people who listened to them categorized as leftist oppositionals, and to listen to him symbolized a kind of resistance to the new order of the post coup period in 1980s.

Why am I focusing on the novel? It is well known that during the 1980s, the most produced literary genres were poetry and short story, but I prefer referring novels to deeply see the psychological climate of the period, which was a result of the basic social conditions of the day. Since the writing turns into a real experience for these writers included in this study, the novel is a genre that can be followed explicitly.

Sartre, putting forward the differences between prose and poetry, attributes great importance to prose and designates the prose writer as a *speaker*. “[H]e designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates.”<sup>19</sup> In the following pages of *What is Literature?*, Sartre asks a question to the writer, which is also crucial for this study: “What is your aim in writing? What undertakings are you engaged in, and why does it require you to have recourse to writing?”<sup>20</sup> Thinking of authors who started writing within the walls of the prison, the connotations of these questions change. It is also so meaningful to ask these questions to the people who previously had not had any life projection, which includes writing. Writing turned into a liberating promise for writers in prison in the 1980s.

“If the words are assembled into sentences, with a concern for clarity, a decision foreign to the intuition, to the language itself, must intervene, the decision

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

of confiding to others the results obtained.”<sup>21</sup> If writers show us the results s/he obtains, the results for the writers writing about September 12 are sorrowful bodies, traumatic experiences, inner conflicts, dissolved life projections and motives, and exhausted hopes. Writing means taking back the lost world within the possibilities of writing. To write is to act, to change the world, to introduce the possibility of change to the world:

Thus, the prose-writer is a man who has chosen a certain method of secondary action which we may call action by disclosure. It is therefore permissible to ask him this second question: “What aspect of the world do you want to disclose? What change do you want to bring into the world by disclosure?” The “engaged” writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change.<sup>22</sup>

The importance of writing lies in its revolutionary characteristic, as Sartre puts it; it is a demand for freedom.<sup>23</sup> Referring to the analysis of Sartre about what literature is, this study is also an attempt to put forward what literature and the act of writing mean for people, especially in the chapter about the prison literature this can be seen explicitly. Writing, telling the way you perceive the outer world as Sartre expresses, is a way of action on the second hand.

Sartre considers the relation between writers and readers as one of accomplices. He adds that the whole art of a writer is hidden in his or her ability to make out of the reader an accomplice.<sup>24</sup> It is a kind of invitation to see and perceive the world as the writer sees and perceives it. If we turn to the question of whether there is a mission of literature, it is a kind of temptation, which is to see the world

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>23</sup> Sartre, *Edebiyat Nedir*, (İstanbul: Can, 2005), p.75.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

and to act negotiating it with the writer. As much as writing is an act of invitation to be an accomplice, reading is an act of bearing the crimes of the writer. It changes your perception, it shows the possibility of a different life, and writing's revolutionary characteristic is hidden under this negotiation between writer and reader. Prison literature or the novels which will be analyzed within this study demonstrates this revolutionary characteristic of the literature, they invite the readers to see the period from another perspective, they make people question the changing social, economic and political atmosphere of the day.

### The Social, Political and Cultural Background of the 1980s

There were some transformations in the cultural, social and political atmosphere of Turkey at the turn of new decade, the 1980s. To question the basics, what were these changes and transformations? As Nurdan Gürbilek states in *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, the 1980s contain possibilities and impossibilities in symbiosis. She asks how it became possible that the cultural transformation in the 1980s created itself as *a liberating promise* and why it was so efficient. In addition, she attempts to draw a picture of the return of the process of the cultural modernization project's suppressed images and content. She tries to find an answer to how, what and where these images and contents returned. Her attempt is to dissociate this period from the emotional approaches that evaluate this period only as a time of anger, regret or relief, and to introduce the different dynamics of this period while presenting how the 1980s included both *possibilities and impossibilities*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, (İstanbul: Metis, 2007), p.8. My emphasis.

According to Nurdan Gürbilek, the 1980s was a time of two different power projects, two different word politics (*söz siyaseti*) and two different culture strategies. She evaluates the 1980s as a time of oppression and prohibition and also as a time of a cultural strategy, which puts itself not by prohibiting but by transforming itself; not by exterminating, but by involving, and not by suppressing but by provoking.<sup>26</sup>

The distinctive feature of the 1980s for Gürbilek is not its feature of bringing close together these contradictions but its feature of holding together and compromising these different cultural strategies that never break off in fact. Political suppression and the lights of display windows; the fear of the war and the cultural rise of the country; torture and the call for individualism; the necessity of being silent and the desire for talking; according to Gürbilek all these contradicting strategies shared the same stage in the 1980s.<sup>27</sup> She defines 1980s with two concepts: “the suppression of the word,” and “the word boom”. In other words, on the one hand there were life spaces that had no voice under the suppression of the governmental power, and, on the other hand, there was a centerless, scattered word boom.<sup>28</sup>

Television became one of the inseparable parts of Turkish families, making people stay at home. The streets in a sense lost their liveliness; people stayed in the houses; the boisterous crowds were dispersed. Private life became important and, on the other hand, as Gürbilek also emphasizes, there was the hunger to observe private lives. People stopped becoming the actors of the political and social events and became spectators. The socio cultural life became a stage, and the audiences observed everything; the trials and executions of the September 12 prisoners,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.21

General Kenan Evren's statements to press, the movies of Banu Alkan and Ahu Tuğba, the military marching, the soap operas of TRT, and last but not least Turgut Özal. The changing economic strategies of the country became visible day by day.

The striking question is, was the September military take over was a collective trauma for society or not? This is an argumentative question if we think of the process lived until the 1980s. There were some major transformations in the 1980s, both globally and nationally. The most commonly known ones are that the Soviet socialist block collapsed and the left has lost its voice, liberal economies dominated the world and a new perspective to the political and social issues occurred. On the other hand, Turkey witnessed a parallel and controversial period at the same time. It was another era under the command of coup d'état and a new culture and economic program in Turkey giving shape to Turkey's future as well.

What I want to do here is not just to give a brief history of the 1980s and onwards but also to write and analyze the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s and onwards affected by the coup d'état focusing on literature specifically. For this purpose, I want to examine literature, especially novels, to see both how the coup d'état affected the literature, the language, and the culture, and to see the representations of this atmosphere in the novels.

### In between the Politics and History: Literature of the 1980s

If we take September 12 as a turning point, literary history or the understanding of literature was also transformed in the 1980s. It would not be wrong to say that literature was perceived as a kind of social tool, which meant that it had a kind of mission concerning society. This point of view, which has its roots in Soviet

socialist literature, is called socialist realist literature in Turkey. It can simply be defined as the assignment of a social role to the writer. It is astonishing that this point of view was acceptable until the 1980s and, we may talk of a rupture in the understanding of literature until that time.

It is clear that the employment of socialist realist criticism wanes at this point. There is an effect of the decline of the leftist politics and oppositions. Moreover, it is not only for left-leaning politics, but also the situation of the writer, or in other words, the image of the man of letters changed. The grounds of social exclusion of the man of letters or in other words, intellectual's becoming *entels* <sup>29</sup> are hidden in the social, economic, and cultural atmosphere of the 1980s. In addition to this, the writer's social status changed. It is clear that there was a strict connection between this transformation and political, economic, social, and cultural changes.

Literature in the 1980s faced some transformations both in its form and content shaped by the social and political changes. It is striking to see that Turkish literature produced most of its pieces of postmodern literature beginning in this period. Writers such as Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin, who are usually evaluated as postmodern writers, started writing their first pieces at this time.

Besides all these, there was a censorship mechanism throughout the decade. After the transition from the martial law to civil politics, that is to say, the year ANAP came to power; a great number of "prejudicial" books were withdrawn from the market because of some judiciary sanctions. The following quote is a lively example and explanation of the situation from a popular magazine:

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<sup>29</sup> There is a relevant thesis analyzing the transformation of the intellectual figure in cartoon strips: Nadir Öperli, "The Entel" Representations of a Degenerated Intellectual Figure in Cartoon Strips. (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006).

Since ANAP came to power in the parliament in Turkey in 1983, 458 publications have been decided to be recollected from sale, 2792 persons consisting of authors, translators, publishers and reporters in charge of these publications have appeared in court, 368 confiscation and demolition decisions have been ordered by various courts of justice. While 39038 kilograms of these publications were burnt in SEKA, approximately 40 tonnes of publication wait their decision to be demolished or other charges. (...) There were charges of 2000 years of imprisonment and fines of billions of Turkish Liras on the reporters, authors and publishers who were tried. The editors-in-chief of political magazines that were published before 1980 were charged with approximately 5000 years of imprisonment. 26 of these editors are still in prison. In the meantime, 303 trials concerning 13 daily newspapers continue.<sup>30</sup>

Contrary to this heavy atmosphere for publishers, readers, and writers, a different way of dealing with politics was opened. Humor books, magazines, comics and caricatures distorting and spoiling the political atmosphere gave a chance to include politics, and a chance to resist this atmosphere. Another striking point is the effort of making the society informed about the real incidences that caused a military takeover. Research books about September 12 written by journalists were bestsellers.<sup>31</sup> Cüneyt Arcayürek, Mehmet Ali Birand and Hasan Cemal's books were the most popular ones focusing on the reasons and events that paved the way to the coup.<sup>32</sup> It can be asserted that there was the loss of the belief and trust in the justice system behind such demand.

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<sup>30</sup> "Kültüre ve Sanata Darbe Üstüne Darbe", Milliyet Sanat 212, (15 March 1989), p.8. "Türkiye'de ANAP'ın iktidara geldiği 1983 yılından bu yana 458 yayın hakkında toplatma kararı verildi, bu yayınların sorumlularından yazar, çevirmen, yayıncı ve gazetecelerin oluşturduğu 2.792 kişi yargılandı, çeşitli mahkemelerce 368 müsadere ve imha kararı verildi. Bu yayınlardan 39 bin 38 kilosu SEKA'da imha edilirken yaklaşık 40 ton yayın ise Adli Emanet'te imha edilmeyi ya da mahkeme kararlarını bekliyor. (...) Yargılanan gazeteci, yazar ve yayıncılar hakkında yaklaşık 2000 yıl hapis cezasıyla milyarlarca lira para cezası verildi. 1980 öncesinde yayımlanan siyasi dergilerin sorumlu yazı işleri müdürleri yaklaşık 5000 yıl hapis cezasına mahkum oldular. Bu yazı işleri müdürlerinden 26'sı halen cezaevinde bulunuyor. Bu arada 13 günlük gazette hakkında açılan 303 dava halen sürüyor."

<sup>31</sup> "Bir Dönemin Kitapları", Milliyet Sanat 228, (15 Kasım 1989) and "12 Eylül'ün Mizahımıza Katkıları", Milliyet Sanat 248 (15 Eylül 1990).

<sup>32</sup> 12 Eylül'e Koşar Adım: Kasım 1979- Nisan 1980 (Ankara: Bilgi, 1988), Müdahale'nin Ayak Sesleri: 1978-1979 (Ankara: Bilgi, 1986), Demokrasi Dur: 12 Eylül 1980 (Ankara: Bilgi, 1986) by Cüneyt Arcayürek; 12 Eylül: Saat 04:00 (İstanbul: Karacan, 1984), Emret Komutanım (İstanbul:

Furthermore, Gürbilek emphasizes the change in language. She asserts that language left its political responsibilities and represented itself as a game. It became arbitrary and causeless. These changes were closely related to the state of literature. According to Gürbilek, literature sought its autonomy and it also shared the same fate with the culture, being under the pressure of the market needs and other pressures of time.<sup>33</sup>

Literature is also articulated to the market economy and there became a literature market in which publishing houses had great importance. The transformations and changes in the understanding of literature mentioned above were also related to the changes in the economic strategies of publishing houses.

### An Overview of September 12 Coup D'état Novels

The editor of *Bir Tersine Yürüyüş* (A Walk Backwards) which is comprised of a selection of September 12 short stories, Hürriyet Yaşar, underlines that the problem of literature is similar to society's situation; the impossibility of speaking, describing, saying a word about the political atmosphere of September 12.<sup>34</sup> The difficulties of discussing September 12 literature also stemmed from the lack of words, lack of a language which could describe the suffocating atmosphere of the 1980s. Additionally, it is astonishing that any analyses of who did not experience September 12 is evaluated as an outside/ inapprehensive stance, yet it is clear that

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Milliyet, 1986) by Mehmet Ali Birand; 12 Eylül Günlüğü (İstanbul: Bilgi, 1986), Özal Hikayesi (Ankara: Bilgi, 1989) by Hasan Cemal

<sup>33</sup> Gürbilek, p.10.

<sup>34</sup> Hürriyet Yaşar (ed.), *Bir Tersine Yürüyüş: 12 Eylül Öyküleri*, (İstanbul: Can, 2006), p.11

history is narrated by people who were not “inside” the period of historical incidences and moments. In addition, any analyses of September 12 are made with the knowledge of the following periods, and different discussions, questions, and comments about the 1980 coup occurred are only possible with the knowledge and experience of the years between 1980 and the 2000s.

Additionally and similarly, discussions about September 12 literature are not independent from the experience of March 12 literature. Moreover, in the examination of September 12 literature should also be known and analyzed March 12 literature. A comparative look will demonstrate the main themes and tendencies in coup novels and their critics. Broadly speaking, it is necessary to analyze the 78 generation as a continuation of the 68 generation to evaluate both the 1970s and also the revolutionaries of the 1970s and 1980s. Hamit Bozarslan analyzes the reasons behind the deadly conflicts between left and right from the second half of the 1970s to the beginnings of the 1980s. He lays bare the dynamics of the conflict:

In the minds of the radical left and right, a deadly conflict that could end only with the elimination of one of them was ineluctable. Their conception of time itself became cramped, in the sense that those involved in the violence could not contemplate their future in a long-term time frame. They could act only within the framework of day-today survival. Survival meant not just wielding weapons, but also shirking or escaping any moral and legal responsibility. This perspective led to the justification of all kinds of violence, including pogroms and massacres. For the civil and military bureaucracy, itself divided between the left- and right-wing factions, the phenomenon of violence also constituted a trauma, not least because it pointed to the possibility of the disintegration of the state itself. This tragic vision and this trauma, which, in turn, became a cause of violence, greatly influenced the evolution of Turkish politics in the following decades.<sup>35</sup>

This deadly conflict which Bozarslan summarizes did not leave a space for young people to deal with the theory, and the books that is literature. For this reason,

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<sup>35</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), p.76.

their association with literature was not the same as that of the 68 generation. Thus they were shaped by different social dynamics. The different responses of two coups can only be evaluated by looking at their different effects on society. It is not hard to say that the September 12 coup was more severe than the March coup, both statistically and psychologically. Moreover, the situation of the left is dissimilar, if we think of the two literatures reciprocally. As it is accepted, 68 was the climax of the left, 78 was the indicator of defeat.

Turning to the discussions about literature, despite the fact that there is a tendency to mention a March 12 literature, it is not same for September 12 literature. It is possible to give some names such as Sevgi Soysal or Füzûzan at first hand when we think of March 12 literature; however, no name comes to minds when we think a name of a writer or a book who or which is interested in September 12. It is partly because those writers of September 12 generally were not known figures. Mostly they started writing after September 12, during the oppressive atmosphere of the 1980s, including Latife Tekin, and prisoner writers such as A. Kadir Konuk and Hüseyin Şimşek.

We can say that September 12 coup literature is quantitatively larger than March 12 coup literature. In respect to this, March 12 literature's novels were written mostly by the known writers of the time such as Füzûzan, Pınar Kür, Sevgi Soysal, Adalet Ağaoğlu and Erdal Öz; thus the argument that literature gave a response to the March coup stems from the March literature's quality. There were so many novels about September 12 in 1980s and here a list of the novels of September 12 literature: *Gece* (Night) by Bilge Karasu; *Sudaki İz* (Traces On the Water), Ahmet Altan; *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) by Latife Tekin; *Yarım Kalan Yürüyüş* (A Walk Half Finished) by Mehmet Eroğlu; *Mor Ötesi* (Beyond Purple) by Samim

Kocagöz; *Hayır* (Non) by Adalet Ağaoğlu; *Çözülme* (The Rout) by A. Kadir Konuk; *Dün Korkusu* (Fear of Yesterday) by Nihat Genç; *Uçurtmayı Vurmasınlar* (Don't Let Them Shoot the Kite) by Feride Çiçekoğlu; *Koyabilmek Adını* (To Call Its Name) by Halil Genç; *Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol* (A Road with Many Divergences) by Hüseyin Şimşek; *Gün Dirildi* (The Day Resurged) by A. Kadir Konuk; *Sıcak Bir Günün Şafağında* (At the Dawn of A Warm Day) by A. Kadir Konuk; *Dersimli Memik Ağa* (Memik Agha of Dersim) by Haydar Işık; and *Eylül Şifresi* (The September Code) by Hüseyin Şimşek. As the number of the books in the list is concerned keeping in mind that these novels are just the ones written in 1980s, the quantitative quality can simply seen.

Additionally, we can not assert that September 12 literature is mostly constituted by canonical writers. On the contrary, September 12 literature is written by non-canonical writers who were newly emerging<sup>36</sup> and writers from prison mostly, and in that sense the literature was created by September 12 victims. Although there were some works about September coup written by canon writers such as *Hayır* (No) and *Üç Beş Kişi* (Curfew) by Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Gece* (Night) by Bilge Karasu, and *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) by Latife Tekin, it still does not consist of an adequate literature according to critics. On the contrary of common assertions, Sibel Irzık evaluates March 12 literature written in 70s as pre September 12 literature:

Many of the novels written in the late 70's are "pre-September 12<sup>th</sup>" novels rather than "post March 12<sup>th</sup>" that is, the thematics of these novels, especially their characterization of the revolutionaries, reflects the political atmosphere that led to the later coup and the sentiments of the authors about the second wave of revolutionary movements. By this calculation, the

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<sup>36</sup> Sibel Irzık, "Military Coup Narratives and the (Dis)articulations of the Political in the contemporary Turkish Novel". Unpublished article, p.10.

literature focusing on September 12<sup>th</sup> constitutes a much larger cluster than March 12<sup>th</sup> literature.<sup>37</sup>

Since thematically they focus on the same incidents and movements, September 12 literature is usually analyzed with a comparison of March 12 literature. In addition to this, many critics suggest that no novel of September 12 has not been written yet. The reason for such an evaluation is, as Sibel Irzik states, the canonical writers of Turkish literature have not given a response to the coup. However, this kind of an appreciation misses out the participation of those “canonical” writers to the oppositional movements of the time. Some authors, like Yaşar Kemal, Adalet Ağaoğlu and Aziz Nesin, signed petitions and tried to raise attention to the conditions of the prisons in the 80s. On the other hand, a part of important literary figures could not comprehend the effects of the military take over. Yaşar Nabi Nayır’s evaluations right after the coup exemplifies the dominant narrative for legitimizing the coup:

This operation led by the National Security Council under Kenan Evren’s leadership inspired trust and grace to all of us in a short amount of time. Yes, this was what had to be done, there was no other way out. Some time was needed to reestablish the state authority that was about to be lost. It was the nation’s turn to know to wait without allowing further impatience.

(...)

We believe we will -now or later- reach tomorrows that carry the hope for peace and trust after these days where we watch the terror decline and the majority of anarchists be caught with great content. For the first time after years, we can feel the existence of light at the horizon, pushing aside the pessimistic world pictures.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>38</sup> Yaşar Nabi Nayır. “1980’e Toplu Bir Bakış”. In Varlık Yıllığı 1981, (İstanbul: Varlık, 1981). p.15. “Kenan Evren’in başkanlığında Milli Güvenlik Konseyince yapılan bu hareket kısa sürede hepimizde bir güven ve minnet duygusu uyandırdı. Evet, yapılması gereken buydu, başka çıkar yol yoktu. Yitirmek üzere olan devlet otoritesini yeniden sağlamak için biraz zaman gerek vardı. Fazla sabırsızlığa yer vermeden beklemesini bilmek düşüyordu artık millete.

It is a challenging point that people can only pass judgment on coup novels if two or more coup literatures are compared or contrasted. Many critics suggests that there is a difference between March 12 coup literature and September 12 coup literature in their responses to the coups. The novels written in the 1970s and onwards about the 1970 military takeover are evaluated by many of literary historians and critics as March 12 literature unable to give a response to the coup<sup>39</sup>.

After the 1980 coup and the following years, this argument is accepted for September 12; and what is more, the same argument for March 12 has been forgotten. If there is a difference between these two coup literatures, we must ask what we expect from literature.

It is clear that we are giving a task to literature in social and political issues. In addition, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, history and politics enter the text as ideology; it's literature's ability to represent the representations of history and politics. Why is there an expectation of response from literature to social and political events? Additionally, what kind of a response is expected in those writings should be debated.

At first hand, I referred to a dictionary for the meaning of "response". In Oxford's dictionary, "response" is defined as "answer; act, feeling, or movement produced by a stimulus or another's action."<sup>40</sup> If the anticipated answer is an act, we

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(...)

Terör olaylarının gitgide azaldığını, anarşistlerin büyük bir kısmının ele geçirildiğini büyük bir memnunlukla izlediğimiz bu günlerden, er-geç, huzur ve güven umudu taşıyan yarınkara ulaşacağımıza inanıyoruz. Yıllardır ilk kez karamasır tabloları bir yana iterek ufukta aydınlığın varlığını hissedebiliyoruz”

<sup>39</sup> Murat Belge is one of these critics who evaluates March 12 novels in some essays published in magazines in Edebiyat Üstüne Yazılar, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998) which comprised of collected essays of Belge.

<sup>40</sup> Oxford Popular English Dictionary and Thesaurus. Prepared by Sara Hawker and Joyce M. Hawkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001

can say that literature is an act of writing in itself, and if a movement is expected, than no one can ignore the changing hands of books; they enter your home, your library, and even your bedroom. As discussed, the revolutionary characteristic of literature inspired by Sartre in the first part of this chapter, expected response is visible as political and historical representations of the period within the work.

Murat Belge, who was a part of the socialist movement in the 1970s, examines March 12 literature in his book *Edebiyat Üstüne Yazılar* ( Essays on Literature) and comes to the conclusion that March 12 is not well depicted in the novels written in 1970s, since writers have a view point “outside” the movement and it is far from being critical.<sup>41</sup> According to Belge, there is a distinction between “insider” and “outsiders”. In this distinction insiders are the ones in the prisons and the outsiders are the public. Novelists are responsible for telling the latter of the former. In addition to this, according to him, novelists must be close to the insiders, that is to say *they should position themselves within the problem*; and this distinction between inside and outside is crucially important to analyze these novels.<sup>42</sup> In another essay called “*Bir ‘Edebiyat Malzemesi’ Olarak 12 Mart Yaşantısı*” ( March 12 Experience as Literary Material) he rearticulates this “inside” and “outside” issue and this time he describes the view point that looks at the events inside as to evaluate March 12 with a Marxist method taking socialism as a measurement. On the contrary, a view point of “outside” means to evaluate incidents and situations more emotionally without seeing that they acted contrary to socialism. His distinction between “inside” and “outside” in the previous essay is advanced in this part and he emphasizes that people who are inside the movement can appreciate events

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<sup>41</sup> Belge, p.115. My emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

objectively, thus they can be inside the socialist problematic. People who are outside of the movement are not able to see the relation between the events and socialism. Because they only develop an emotional relation, they are “outside.”<sup>43</sup>

What Murat Belge presents his expectation from literature in a sense in these lines. He reveals if and only if left leaning writers who are inside the movement can produce a literary work concerning September 12, or in other words he expects a respond from the left inherently. As cited, Belge explains how this response should be, but he makes this analysis thinking of March 12 and his explanation is inadequate for September 12 to handle a whole literary body. It is possible to say that some writers who are outside of the movement only handle the issue from an emotional perspective and for this reason they are usually far from having a profound questioning of the period. However, history or politics is intrinsic to the text. It is represented as ideology, as Eagleton asserts, so what Murat Belge implies is ideological itself, and it is a rough Marxist expectation from the literary work to have an agenda just focused on one perspective. Such an analysis determines the borders of the work and restricts the ability of literature to represent the representations of the atmosphere.

Şükrü Arın, who is a writer and critic in *Birikim*, a montly journal, attempts to describe this inside and outside issue, which is depicted by the analyses of Murat Belge, by looking at literature’s position in relation to politics. According to Arın, the main problem is positioning literature itself out of the disaster, contrary to the literature after March 12. For Arın, literature was at the center of the problem. However, September 12, there was no obligation of literature to be in the problem.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.143.

<sup>44</sup> Şükrü Arın, “Edebiyat 12 Eylül’ü Kalben Destekledi”, interview by Osman Akınhay, Mesele 9, (2007), p.7

“Literature would not be able to see anything even if it looked at September 12, since it had lost its ability to see, to see in this way.”<sup>45</sup> For Argin, the motive that gave a way to literature to lose its ability to see and feel is the de-fragmentation of the public. With the public its conscience literature also has broken into pieces.<sup>46</sup> As many historians express, Argin also thinks that there exists a great gap between literature and history, between society and its history, between literature and society with September 12.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, I would not describe the changing relation among them as a gap. The thing which seems to be as a gap is actually is in between society and politics. Crowds dispersed and the individual became introverted, closed its doors to the outside world for renewal, repair, revenge, anger and for new possibilities and imaginings. September 12 was a great shock for society since the individual crisis coincided with the social crisis, and what we see in the literary texts focusing on the September 12 military take over is this coincidence and conflict. Literature was reshaped with these crises. Its language, structure, and style has changed, were fragmented into pieces and then these pieces came together in a different form as they adopted the transformations within the period.

### Main Themes and Tendencies in Coup Novels

What are the main themes and tendencies in coup novels? As I said before, we can say that these literatures are mostly left-leaning literatures, so mostly their

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. , p.7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.7

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. , p.7.

subject is revolutionaries, their organizational activities and their changing life, understanding and relations with other comrades after the coup. Those revolutionaries are usually reflected within their organizational relations and broadly speaking they are arrested, interrogated, undergo any kind of torture and at the end, they are extricated. Moreover, torture under custody is the momentous theme. The problematic feature of these novels is that who and why they torture are ignored. The absolute aim to narrate torture becomes to describe the torture. Torture loses its temporality, its close ties with the history and with the period.

Another striking point about the revolutionaries and organizational relations is that there on the one hand, is both the glorification of being organized and the act of organizations; and, on the other hand, an essentialist criticism of the despotic structures of the organizations.

In the previous part, it was said that the September 12 coup fragmented the public. Additionally, it fragmented the language of literature in a way. In novels such as *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) and *Gece* (Night) it is as if severity of the intervention broke their language, and because of this, these works are like broken mirrors reflecting multi images; that is to say, like the public, the language was fragmented, disrupted, and shattered.

Another theme in these novels is the intellectual's experience of the events. We see hopeless, lonely middle class people who are usually on the threshold of suicide and who suffer existentially. In these novels, the public's changing attitude is highlighted and the position and situation of the intellectuals are questioned in the society. Those intellectuals, mostly those who have lost their powerful position in society, and their rootlessness stems from losing their class' powerful position.

Beside the intellectuals there is petit bourgeois and their petty bourgeoisie morals in March 12 literature especially. We see lively examples of this in Sevgi Soysal's novels mostly. As Argin points out, in these novels the petty bourgeois and their morals seem to be the subject of March 12 novels, and it is not a subject of the September novel which is an indicator of the changing social structure of the 1980s and later. We can accept that as Argin cited in *Mesele*, the petit bourgeois' position in society has changed, petty bourgeoisie morals have declared their ascendancy and their hegemony over society.<sup>48</sup>

According to Fethi Naci, the intelligentsia and bureaucrats consist of the petit bourgeoisie in Turkey due to the historical facts of the country.<sup>49</sup> In the economic sense, the petit bourgeoisie consists of artisans, craftsmen and small producers.<sup>50</sup>

Turkey was in a process of transformations both economically and politically until the end of 1970s. A new and different economic program was announced by the new minister of finance, Turgut Özal, in the year the coup took place. The economic affects on the transformation of literature was outlined above. Additionally, it is striking that it is not possible to see the petit bourgeois in September 12 novels in as lively as in March 12 novels. Instead of this, there are suffering bodies, and there are people who have lost their language, abandoned themselves to despair, questioning their position in society as revolutionaries, and there are intellectuals who have existential problems. The September 12 coup left stronger and deeper effects on society, so the conflict of the individual and its crisis is deeper and much more visible. One reason the petit bourgeois is as so visible in these novels may be the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>49</sup> Fethi Naci, 100 Soruda Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme. (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1981), p.358.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 358.

September 12 coup's severity. It had a traumatic impact on society, and individuals; it disrupted and shattered lives. Thus, the novels of September 12 are full of despairing souls who have lost their futures, and are full of memories of torture.

Argın, having a Marxist worldview, explain this as a process pertaining to the breaking away of the social stratum called the "petit-bourgeoisie" from being an "intermediate class" to swiftly becoming an essential part of the middle class.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, he adduces Sevgi Soysal's novels in which the petit bourgeoisie are depicted as souls wandering perturbed and hesitant under two basic classes, that is to say proletariat and bourgeoisie.<sup>52</sup> A considerable part of society involved in handling capital felt relieved by the coup, yet his analysis is still far from covering all of society. Argın includes in this part of society even the families of the people in prisons, and asserts that they politically were not against the September 12 coup<sup>53</sup>. Despite the fact that this is not a satisfactory explanation of why society and literature lost their ability to see and this kind of analyses ignores and blocks the way to see the real effects of the coup to the society, to the daily life, there was a factual reality that at least they thought their children were no longer in danger anymore in the beginning and until the executions and the news out of the prison began. After that time, the families of the people in the jails were so desperate in the sense that they even could not get news about their children. In memoirs, letters and some oral history works, we can observe what the families really felt about September 12. They were politically opposed to the junta and its governance.

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<sup>51</sup> Argın, p.11

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.,p.11

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.,p.11

Another theme about revolutionaries is the matter of innocence. At any time, it is pointed out that the revolutionaries fought for the sake of society. They were against the law, yet they were for society. As Murat Belge points out, this results in a dichotomy between doing something for the sake of society and the law.

As Argin writes if the September coup is described by known writers, then someone evaluates the works as not being realistic and if it is written by the people who experienced it, and then it is evaluated as not being literary. This comparing and contrasting issue is usually against the September 12 coup d'état novels, but not the novels only, it is also in vogue with the victims of September 12. The major means of contrasting the issue is whether these people are innocent or not and it is not hard to guess which coup's victims were considered "innocent." In a literary journal called *Mesele*, there is an illuminating example of the innocence matter; I am quoting from the reporter's words:

A while ago Pınar Kür uttered a long debated claim: "I'll tell you why March 12 has given this inspiration. First of all, my age was closer to theirs. What's more, they were really quite idealistic and very innocent. Such innocence tortures the human soul. Not one man was killed in March 12. I mean the government did of course, but... These kids were hanged and bombed without killing one single human. Sinan, Deniz, Hüseyin, Yusuf, Mahir... These are events which torture my soul. On September 12, no one has. There were also youth that were killed but they seemed ferocious to me. They didn't have the innocence of March 12."<sup>54</sup>

Pınar Kür contrasts the two coup d'états centering on the idea that March 12 was more innocent than September 12. Between the lines one can easily distinguish September 12's victims are depicted as criminals who deserve to be punished

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.10. "Bir süre önce Pınar Kür epeyce tartışılan bir laf etti: "12 Mart niye verdi bu ilhamı söyleyeyim. Bir kere yaşımda daha yakındı onlara. Bir de onlar gerçekten çok idealist ve çok masumdular. O masumiyetleri insanın içini yakar. Bir tek adam öldürülmedi 12 Mart'ta. Yani devlet öldürdü de.. Bir tek insan öldürmeden asıldı bu çocuklar, bombalandılar. Sinan, Deniz, Hüseyin, Yusuf, Mahir... Bunlar benim içimi yakan olaylardır. 12 Eylül'de kimse benim içimi yakmadı. Orada da gençler öldü ama onlar biraz yırtıcı geldi bana. 12 Mart'ta olan o masumiyet yoktu onlarda."

although the youth received a harsher blow. Such a view point is also available in some books and it's the best illustration is Ahmet Altan's novel, *Sudaki İz* (Traces On the Water). In this novel all of the themes counted above can be found. Yet, Altan deals with sexuality rather than the main problem and he is like the concrete stature of the 1980s. He desires to be popular and his main aim seems to have been to be a bestselling writer of the period. It is impossible to find any criticism of the hegemonic ideology of the time, rather he includes it by reducing the revolutionaries to shallow images who can change easily with the conditions of coming days and no free thought apart from the organization.

There is one more theme which reflects the heavy and traumatic atmosphere: returning home. Home is the symbol of the all values and morals that are opposed within the movement. Back home means to recognize defeat. It is also a signifier of the individual crisis which is a result of social crisis. It is the reflection of the hopelessness but the desire for repair and rehabilitation.

In this study, the term coup novel is included the prison literature also. Therefore, all the thematics counted above are also available for the prison literature. However, there are also themes like the guilt conscience, resistance to the conditions in the prisons and moral values of the revolutionaries and petit bourgeoisie morals in the works of the prison literature. As it is asserted in previous parts, examining both literatures or in other words including the prison literature to the September 12 literature, it is possible to get the whole picture of the 1980s. The representations of how the September 12 coup d'état experienced in the streets, in the work places, in the universities, within the families, and in the prisons can be seen in within the pages of these novels. The following chapters focuses on the novels. In the second chapter, two novels of the canonized authors of Turkish literature who are also

known as oppositional figures will be analyzed. Their approach to the post coup era and their positioning after the coup will be analyzed. In the third chapter, the prison literature of 1980s specifically Yeni Sesler (New Voices) Series of Belge Publications will be introduced. In addition to this, three of the novels within the series will be analyzed keeping in mind that these writers experienced the coup at first hand. What kind of characters that these writers created, what are the similarities of them with the literature produced by the canonized authors within this study will be examined. All in all, it will show us that the exclusion of the prison literature from the literary history is ideological in the sense that prison literature problematizes the coup taking a position opposite of it, opposite of the new order just like the canonized literature but what differentiates it from the canonized one is that the producers of prison literature are “criminals,” who were exiled from the public life.

## CHAPTER 2

Revolution was once a probability and very beautiful.<sup>55</sup>

### SEPTEMBER 12 NOVELS

In this chapter, *Hayır* (No) by Adalet Ağaoğlu and *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) by Latife Tekin will be analyzed with the help of some distinctive themes such as intellectuals, revolutionaries, fear and fragmentation.

The common feature of these works is their emphasis on the individual's psychology. Each book focuses on an individual crisis which overlaps with the social crisis. In the image of the individuals and their lives, we see the representations of the period. As Eagleton asserts, individual psychology is the product of society.<sup>56</sup> The heavy atmosphere which sets the background of the work is in a way related to the atmosphere of the period in the work was produced. The works in this chapter deal with the historical and political atmosphere, making them structural problems of the text, the literature and the language. The reason behind the choice of Ağaoğlu and Tekin is their oppositional positionings within the social and political space. Although they also opposed the coup as the prisoner authors, their works were not excluded from the literary space. Analyses of their novels will present their different and similar approaches with the works of prison literature.

### Analyses of Novels

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<sup>55</sup> Murat Uyrkulak, *Tol* (İstanbul: Metis, 2007), p.11. "Devrim, vaktiyle bir ihtimaldi ve çok güzeldi."

<sup>56</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Edebiyat Eleştirisi Üzerine* (İstanbul: Eleştiri Yayınevi, 1970), pp.16-17.

### Hayır by Adalet Agaoglu and Intellectuals

I do not think that arrest happens only behind bars. After September 12th, we were all thrown into various cells which were invisible and did not make any of us heroes either. Those who have lived it know it real well.<sup>57</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, writer's responses and reactions to the September coup varied greatly. The years following the coup, there was a movement among the intellectuals and in 1984, about 1,300 intellectuals including writers, journalists, artists, directors, and academicians filed a petition called "Intellectuals Petition" (*Aydınlar Dilekçesi*) objecting to the coup government's applications and their new oppressive, conservative, restrictive, and violence-filled policies. Adalet Ağaoğlu was one of these intellectuals. *Hayır* (Non) can be read as Intellectuals Petition's novel, since it is a kind of critique of September 12, its effects on society, the daily life, daily politics, lifestyles, and what is more to the point, its effects on intellectuals and university autonomy.

Although Ağaoğlu does not accept the evaluations asserting *Hayır* as being a September 12 novel in interviews gave in some literary magazines<sup>58</sup>, I suggest that it is a September 12 novel because of the reasons I put forward. And what is more, it is also *Dar Zamanlar* (Hard Times) trilogy's last book which witnesses three divergent periods, the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (1960s and May 27, the 1960 coup and *Ölmeye Yatmak* (Lying Down To Die); 1970s and March 12, 1971 and *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (Wedding Night); and lastly the 1980s and September 12, 1980 coup and *Hayır*). In

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<sup>57</sup> Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Başka Karşılaşmalar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2001), p.197. "Tutuklanmanın sadece demir parmaklıklar arasında olduğunu düşünmüyorum. 12 Eylül sonrasında hepimiz gözle görülmeyen ve hiçbirimizi kahraman da yapmayan çeşitli hücrelere tıkıldık. Yaşayanlar bunu çok iyi bilirler"

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.173.

addition, *Hayır*'s time or the period of time coincide with the days after September coup and also in terms of temporality it signifies a day under the influence of the September military take over. Not just for this reason, but also it is a September novel or it can be evaluated as a novel with the September 12 as a subject, since the novel's main character, Aysel, resists and opposes the new order after September coup. In other words, the novel designates a period through the agency of individual.

*Dar Zamanlar* (Hard Times) trilogy's main character, Aysel, is from the Republic's first generation and is a professor at the university. Aysel is one of the Republic's intellectuals and it must be emphasized that she is an "intellectual," since being an intellectual, the intellectual's duty and the change in what being an intellectual constitute one of the main themes of *Hayır*.

As said above, *Hayır* is a September 12 novel and within these novels, it is one of the novels that discuss September 12's historical and social importance. It is not one of the novels that is fixed only on torture or revolutionaries' lives. What I want to do attempt to see the distribution of politics among the books. In *Hayır*, it is possible to find representations of both the dominant ideology of the period and the adversary ideologies, more than that the narrative is the space of conflicting ideologies; it depicts the process of the domination of the hegemonic ideology of the day among others. The style seems to be the product of this conflicting space; it mostly affected the perception of time and history, thus the ambivalence in the plot indicates and represents this atmosphere.

To be truthful, it does not describe torture or caricaturized images of revolutionaries and it does not glorify the past. The past is a part of present and future in the *Dar Zamanlar* trilogy. What is referred to by "dar" here is a signifier of three "dar" times of Turkey, politically and socially; that is to say, three coups. The

“present” in *Hayır* is the moment that attaches the past and future, and *Hayır*’s fictional structure is very much related to this temporality. The novel is made up of the parts morning, nightfall, night, sunrise and moment and the events in the novel cover one day. Moreover, with flashbacks, moments that we can only see some pieces of and inner dialogues, we can get some idea about the past which shaped the novel’s present and the future, which will be shaped by Present.

It is not wrong to say the motivating matter for Ağaoğlu’s writing is “time”. At this point, it is necessary to analyze *Hayır*’s historical time reference, September 12, which convulses, jerks, and breaks the novel’s “present” into pieces. With this historical reference, *Hayır*’s jerky, fragmental and plural time gains significance and meaning.

September 12 does not provide a historical background just for colouring the fiction, additionally; narrative is shaped by September 12. We can say that Aysel’s blue devils, inner conflicts, her daily life, what she meets in the streets are all shaped and become vague by the historical reference of September 12. With the help of inner dialogues and stream of consciousness, it is clear to see how the main character’s life is captured by this history and how it affects her life, her choices and ideas.

Reflecting to the 1980s soul, *Hayır* is the novel of the new order, which is established with the coup and which changed, transformed and affected the perspectives, understandings and lives rapidly. The period of time which is a part of Aysel’s daily life, following the coup are the years ruled by the 1982 Constitution. Opposing this new military order which cut the stream of time, its future imagination and its past, Aysel enounces her anger saying “No” with some piece of hope and obstinately which is also her reflection’s summary to coup. Aysel says no to the new

constitution, the university's new order shaped by YOK and changes in society morally and intellectually. Aysel, who can not acquiesce what has been given to her, who has a little hope this system might change, writes new texts within the text and all these texts, which are some letters or articles reflect as a part of political action. For instance, in the article she wrote when constitutional change was on the agenda and caused her dismissal from university, she opposes not only the constitution change but also the martial law and its new order:<sup>59</sup>

Today you assume things, that the former constitution did not count as crime, as crimes according to the laws that you have manipulated. You declare crimes and punishments relying on a non-existent law.

Fake ministers, prime minister and members of the parliament of a fake law! Down with all of you, down with all of you!

I invite all of you to say "No!" to the demands of this fake government until there remains no one who hasn't been subjected to injustice by the martial law. Let us say "No!" to all these practices conducted by those who've stepped on us by force, if we don't really want to be guilty at the face of history. Let us pull away our shoulders they have sat upon.

In the following parts of the same article, she also expresses at once how and what the September coup changed and affected. According to Aysel, history becomes meaningless after such an intervention, therefore, the period, the time in which they are living is like a fairy tale time, unaware of the devils and bad-hearted witches who will appear a little later or not knowing when what will happen. It is useful to

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<sup>59</sup> Adalet Ağaoğlu, Hayır (İstanbul: YKY, 2005), p.48. "Dünkü Anayasa'nın suç saymadığı şeyleri bugün sizler, kendi kesip biçtiğiniz yasalara göre suçlu kılıyorsunuz. Olmayan bir yasaya dayanarak hem suç, hem ceza biçiyorsunuz.

Yalan bir yasanın yalan Başkanı, Başbakanı, Meclis üyeleri! Hepiniz aşağı, hepiniz aşağı!

Bu ülkenin bütün insanları!

Ortada sıkıyönetim yasalarıyla ziyana uğramış tek kişi kalmayana dek sizleri, hep birlikte bu yalan yönetimin bütün buyruklarına, "Hayır!" demeye çağırıyorum. Tarih önünde gerçekten suçlu olmak istemiyorsak, sırtımıza zorla binmiş olanların kendi kendilerine yaptıkları bütün uygulamalara, "Hayır!" diyelim. Üstlerine oturdukları omuzlarımızı altlarından çekelim

remember that all the archives of political parties were seized and destroyed by the martial law government which can be interpreted as an attempt to destroy and break off the history of the time. Thereby in saying no to this order's constitution, she is also objecting to martial law and its applications, and she intends to remind us that lives that are made miserable in the prisons, lost ones on probation, oppressed ones and bodies under torture.

The article's keyword is "no." She designates the main theme of the novel in the following lines:<sup>60</sup>

PROTECTING OUR FREE IDENTITY IN ANY CONTEXT RELIES ON  
THESE THREE WORDS WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPRESSED IN  
ACTION: NO TO INNOVATION...

NO TO UNIFORMITY. NO TO UNIFORM. NO TO REPETITION...

Saying no to iteration, becoming the same and uniformity, she refers to September 12's understanding, which demolished ideologies, annihilated the individual who is curious, questioning, silencing the streets. Since September 12 is the name of a blurred future, the novel also opens to a murky future. Just after writing these sentences, Aysel makes preparations for the ceremony which is going to be performed for her. But, whether she will go to the ceremony or not is implied by murky and incomplete expressions. The "impossibility" of an optimistic future imagination permeates not only Aysel, but also society. Daily life is stopped, uniformed, and become monotonous; in addition to this, different voices are silenced. The questions of why, what and how are blurred and lose their meaning. Forgetting

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.45. "HER DURUMDA ÖZGÜR KİMLİĞİMİZİ KORUYABİLMEK ANCAK EDİMLE SÖYLENEBİLECEK ŞU İKİ SÖZCÜĞE BAĞLI: YENİLEMEYE HAYIR..."

AYNILAŞMAYA HAYIR. AYNILIĞA HAYIR. YİNELEMEYE HAYIR..."

that they are oppressed by the martial law, people on the streets seem to be “soldiers” of this new order.

Trying to arrive to the airport and observing that all the precautions of police and soldiers cut/ stop/break/impose the daily life, Aysel questions and is concerned about for whom and for what the precautions are taken in the streets. The meaning and aim of actions become vague and are turned into a performance. Stopped cars and checked out controls are assumed as to be parts of a performance by the people on the streets. They seem to be the voluntary/ compulsive spectators of this performance. As illustrated below, Aysel attempts not to be a part of this performance and objects to these daily controls, saying “We will not go back! We want to continue!..”<sup>61</sup>, and hopes that the crowds in the street might be resist as she does; however, what she hears is not a supporting voice: “What does this woman want to do, for God’s sake? Is she an anarchist? There is a commandment so what can those men do? Why does she speak on behalf of us? Why does she includes us?”<sup>62</sup>

### Suicide

Another main theme of the novel is suicide. It is not just because Aysel’s article is about intellectual’s suicide, but it is also about its fictive importance for the novel. One of the leading themes of the trilogy of which *Hayır* (No) is a part is also suicide. It is necessary to remember that, the first book of the trilogy, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, is the story of a day on which Aysel waits for her death in a hotel room. She questions if she really wants to die as a consequence of her suspension from

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 87. “Gerilemiyoruz! Yolumuza devam etmek istiyoruz!..”

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. “Ne istiyor bu kadın yahu? Anarşik midir nedir? Buyruk varmış. Ne yapsın adamlar? Hem niye bizim yerimize konuşuyor bu? Bizi niye işin içine katıyor?”

university. *Bir Dügün Gecesi*, the second book of the trilogy belongs to Aysel's sister Tezel; "If we do not commit suicide, let's drink then." Suicide is a herald of a possibility of life imagination and it is at the same time a signifier of a hopeless world.

The moment when the thought of suicide is dominant is clearly the moment of crisis: Ağaoğlu evaluates that moment of crisis as a last negotiation at that threshold between life and death. She designates the time scheme of all three books as this negotiation requires; she props the fictionalization against this scheme.<sup>63</sup>

As the above quotation indicates, Jale Parla interprets "*dar zamanlar*" as the moments of crisis. It is the last possibility in order to resist the restrictions and oppressions caused by the martial law, its new constitution and order on the point of silence. In a magazine interview Ağaoğlu describes suicide as: "'Doesn't qualifying suicide as an 'escape' perhaps mean to keep the possibility of an escape hole always accessible?'"<sup>64</sup> Signifying the suppression which can not be expressed within the possibilities of language, suicide is represented as the last escape. Most particularly, it is a last resort for the intellectuals whose words are not taken seriously anymore and who are converted into jokes.

The pessimistic and heavy atmosphere of the book does not stem from just the fact that Aysel is an old person; it is also the result of losing her shelter, autonomous university. Ağaoğlu depicts the changing mindset of the new university order established by a new foundation, YOK. As known, YOK was established by the qualified martial law, and a great number of professors were dismissed, or

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<sup>63</sup> Jale Parla, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne Roman* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), p.305. İntihar düşüncesinin egemen olduğu an, açıkça kriz anıdır; yaşamla ölüm arasındaki eşikte son bir hesaplaşma olarak değerlendirir bu kriz anını Ağaoğlu. Üç romanın da zaman şemasını bu hesaplaşmanın gerektirdiği biçimde tasarlar; kurgulamayı bu şemaya yaslar.

<sup>64</sup> Ağaoğlu, *Karşılaşmalar*, p.243 "İntiharı bir 'kaçış' olarak nitelemek, acaba bir kaçış deliği imkânını her zaman açık tutmak anlamına gelmez mi?"

banned from having state employees with the justification of 1402. The predominant mindset in the universities in this period is embodied by “*Özerk Milli K lt r Kurumu Bilim Hizmet Dalı Deęerlendirme Seęici Kurulu*”( Autonomous National Culture Institution Jury of Evaluation for Scientific Branch of Service), which arranges the ceremony for Aysel. Thus, because Aysel is opposed to this foundation, whether Aysel would go to this ceremony or not is murky at the end of the novel. Throughout the novel, we read some pieces from Aysel’s possible speeches in this ceremony, yet we can not be sure whether this speech is made or not. The university is taken parallel to the problem of intellectuals. That is to say; it is introduced as having an enlightening function in the novel.

What is this novel’s political view or is there a distance from politics? It should be noted that *Hayır* (Non) was written with a leftist and adversary world view. *Hayır* (Non) is the novel of a woman who feels herself responsible for the society. As Jale Parla indicates, it is a crisis novel. The last part of the book is like a preview of 80s future, additionally the ambiguity dominating the narrative, is similarly parallel with the real world’s temporality.

It is not apparent whether Aysel attends the ceremony or not. What makes us think possibly she is absent is her writer friend’s fictitious narrations about Aysel’s aftermath. In these lines, who is writing the text is ambiguous. The writer in the novel, describes different scenarios for Aysel’s suicide when he is going to her home from the ceremony. In this way, it is implied with the help of the pessimistic atmosphere of the book, that Aysel might have committed a suicide. It is as if Aysel is cleared away from the world, she might have gone to another world, may be a new

world, yet, as Ağaoğlu indicated in an interview “ A New Place’s name is sometimes committing suicide when still you are alive.”<sup>65</sup>

### Yenins as New Person

Yenins, who is a close friend of Aysel, is a character who symbolizes hope and a last escape other than suicide. The narrator indicates that Yenins means “new man,” which is composed of two Turkish words “yeni” (new) and “insan” (man) at the end of the novel. Moreover, Yenins declares that he can only exist with the past, which he equates it with Aysel. According to him, it is only possible to approach a hopeful future imagination with the knowledge of the past. I think that this should not be thought of apart from Ağaoğlu’s suggestions about time and history. Evidently, being a central theme of her trilogy, history determines the trilogy’s past, present and future.

Through the agency of Yenins, we are informed that Aysel has crossed the “border” and she has stepped out of the “repetition.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, Yenins emphasizes that Aysel’s choice is not an escape; on the contrary, it must be interpreted as a kind of refusal, and underlines that refusal does not mean escape. On the thin line between the escape and refusal, Aysel sails in a misted world seeking a new world/ a new future/ a new history composed of moments and time pieces:

A boat in the sea, similar to a ghost ship, sails away from the coast gently ripping through the fog. It’s a boat in which no one can make out. Still, it slides through the fog as if it knows the way, having drawn its route, not

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.244

<sup>66</sup> Ağaoğlu, Hayır, p. 268.

being dragged. As if it's leaving behind a child's happy laughter. Subtle lines of that laughter on the waves that hit the coast.<sup>67</sup>

Is it interpreted as a kind of future search? It is clear that Ağaoğlu questions the coup from her class and position. She approaches the September coup as an intersection moment of an individual crisis, annihilation and indistinction with a social crisis, annihilation and indistinction which also correspond to the September coup's atmosphere. "The moment that turns into another thing at the Moment it's caught, for that same reason, is charged with infinite solutions as much as chances of integration."<sup>68</sup>

*Gece Dersleri* by Latife Tekin and the Distorted Time, Individual and Language: the Loss of the Wholeness

You don't want to understand, I know you can endure the pain you suffer only by drawing your own borders. But: Your history is lost. But: Your memory is torn to pieces. (...) Don't tell me people do not deserve their dreams.<sup>69</sup>

There have been so many discussions about Latife Tekin's third book, *Night Lessons* (*Gece Dersleri*) since 1986, the year it was published. Although at first sight it is difficult to determine, it is possible to find the historical and political

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.267. Denizde bir sandal, bir hayal gemisi benzeri, sisi yararak usul usul uzaklaşıyor kıyıdan. İçinde hiç kimsenin seçilemediği bir sandal bu. Yine de sürüklenerek değil, yolunu çizmiş, o yolu bilircesine kayıyor sisin içinde. Geride, bir çocuğun neşeli gülüşlerini bırakıyor sanki. Kıyıya vuran dalgalarda o gülüşün ince izleri.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.271. "Yakalandığı an'da başka bir şeye dönüşen an, aynı nedenle sonsuz çözüme, bir o kadar da birleştirme olanaklarıyla yüklüdür."

<sup>69</sup> Latife Tekin, *Gece Dersleri* (İstanbul: Everest, 2004), p.99. All the quotes from *Gece Dersleri* are translated by Şahan Yatarkalkmaz and Gökçe Kuruçay. "Anlamak istemiyorsun, duyduğun acıya ancak kendi sınırlarını çizerek dayanabileceğini biliyorum. Ama: Tarihin kayıp. Ama: Belleğin paramparça. Sınırlarını çizerken, umudun hala içinde oturduğu eski yapıyı ince bir sesle – mezardan bile geliyor olsa- alay alman doğru değil. Bana insanların düşlerine layık olmadıklarını söyleme."

representations and significations which penetrate the novel in the fragmented and distorted language and style. The historical and political atmosphere the novel is indicating is the post coup period of September 12, 1980. The military takeover of 1980 is as it is emphasized within the framework of this study, a crisis point of leftist oppositional movements the political agenda of which was making a revolution before the coup and it was at the point that the crisis within these movements became explicit. The leftist movement was scattered already at the end of 1979; however, the September coup just gave it a date, a history.

A chronological summary of the novel would be helpful due to its fragmented structure, since there are not any elements of fiction in the classical sense that is, the setting of the story is indefinite, and there is no fixed placement, time or plot. It is because *Night Lessons* is not a novel in the classical sense; it can be counted as one of the examples of post modern fiction in Turkish literature. All in all, it is not just a coincidence when the change in style and language, the transition of classical post modern fiction, and the period Tekin's works started to be published happened in the 1980s.

We are informed from the very beginning that it is the story of Gülfidan and that we are going to read her memoirs and confessions. It is told that while she was putting up posters on the walls at night, shouting slogans with the crowds, escaping from the police, her life was also flowing and she watched it with "teary eyes."

*Night Lessons*, the book of "a young militant's pale memoirs and breathtaking confessions," is a critique of the adversary organizations and their structure. It is the story of the alienation and fragmentation which Gülfidan feels in her body and identity throughout the years of organization and it is the story of the totality which she loses completely with the coup. When Gülfidan, who is forced to

live with an identity which does not belong to her, is ordered by the organization to disguise her name and appearance after the coup, she realizes that they have already been disguised. She compresses her individuality for the organization in which it is already impossible to be an individual. The entire story is established on this realization and confession of Gülfidan when she becomes Sekreter Rüzgar (Secretary Wind) that she is no one, she hides her real self. The young militant Gülfidan's chain of breathtaking confessions is the story of the disguising of her identity from the organization to make herself accepted in the organization and it is the story of a purification from all fake identities, a story of her inner conflicts. Like in *Non*, in *Night Lessons* an individual crisis which overlaps with a social crisis is depicted, and the social crisis which coincides with Gülfidan's crisis is the September 12 coup d'état.

Gülfidan's hidden identity, her womanhood and her life which was shaped for the sake and benefit of the organization, seems to her as time pieces wasted. The first rupture in her mind is related to her body. That is to say, the entire story is established on the relationship between womanhood and body. Gülfidan's femininity is stuck in the masculine discourse of the organization and it is shaped through this discourse. She confesses that she exists within the organization as a faint image. Even her desire of Gülfidan to have a child is held by the organization.

A young woman who slowly swept ashes with her red wings, with her checked skirt, her heelless shoes, her eyebrows never trimmed, her hair short like a boy, was singing a march, mumbling.

(...)

She was my looking glass and look-alike.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17. "Kızıl kanatlarıyla ağır ağır kül süpüren, ekose etekli, topuksuz ayakkabılı, kaşları hiç alınmamış, saçları erkek saçları gibi kısa genç bir kadın mırıldanarak marş söylüyordu.

(...)

O benim aynamdı ve aynımdı."

Her association with her own body is a state of detachment. When it is demanded that she disguise her identity, she establishes a fake world on a fake world, yet she has not got the actual world, real body or language to establish such a world.

I was besorrowed in the basement of a colossal complex at a young age with the codename Secretary Wind. The rolling image of my life abandoned my memory of our people. I haven't yet survived the shock. I am no different than a sufferer who after so many years, is looking for herself in the house in which she was born. I find it hard to remind myself of my name and who I am, and am urged an intact sleep.<sup>71</sup>

As Nurdan Gürbilek claims the organization is a representative of masculine discourse; moreover, there is no right to speak as a woman in the political arena represented by the organization. Her body does not belong to her; the organization possesses everything even her body, personality and individuality. Thus it is the story of a catastrophe, the loss of the ability to renew and accomplish. There is no intention of the text to narrate a renewal or accomplishment, by the way.

İskender Savaşır attempts to analyze the relationship between the leftist movement and the text and he explains the process of organization and the rupture it caused for individuals: “the revolutionary theory that can not construe its own practice needs a *meddah*. The adventure that has began as a detachment continues as a disintegration.”<sup>72</sup>

The representation of politics in *Night Lessons* is hidden in this relationship between Gülfidan and the organization. As in Savaşır's words, it is the concrete

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.9 “Sekreter Rüzgar kod adıyla koskocaman bir sitenin zemin katında genç yaşta mahzun kaldım. Yuvarlanıp giden hayatımın hayali, halkımızın bendeki hatırasına yüz çevirdi. Henüz şoku atlatamadım. Yıllar ve yıllar sonra doğduğu evde kendini arayan bir ıstıraplıdan farksızım. Adımı ve kim olduğumu aklıma getirmekte güçlük çekmekteyim ve deliksiz bir uykuya zorlanmaktayım.”

<sup>72</sup> İskender Savaşır, “Latife Tekin’in Gece Dersleri: Bir Unutuşun Öyküsü”, Yeni Gündem 2 no.2 (17-23 March 1986), p.59. “Kendi pratiğini anlamlandıramayan devrimci kuram bir meddaha gerek duyar. Bir kopuş olarak başlayan serüven bir bölünmüşlük olarak sürer.”

illustration of a revolutionary theory which can not interpret the practice it produced and thus, establishes itself outside of time and history.<sup>73</sup> The history in which this kind of organization has positioned itself does not have any real connection with real history. It belongs to a timeless history, as Gülfidan expresses, in a fairy tale time. If we remember Aysel, the main character of *Non*, she also describes the period as a fairy tale time, as if what she experience can be in a fairy tale.

Accordingly, the demand to exclude herself from history with which the organization positiones itself coincides with the rupture in the real historical time and thus historical time also falls pieces. The moment also is split up by the past and the future, which is quickly and frighteningly determined by the moment. It is as if the loss of the ties with the past. Savaşır points out that this loss is if and only possible to have a point outside the history.<sup>74</sup> Is it the criticism that evaluating any position outside of the determined positions? Through the agency of Gülfidan, Latife Tekin evaluates the leftist organization in which she was a member at on time. That is to say, positioning herself outside and above the movement, she criticizes the organizational structure.

In the dialogues of Gülfidan and the head of the organization, there is a reciprocal accusation. While Gülfidan criticizes the despotic structure of the organization, the head of the organization accuses Gülfidan of not being serious or loyal to the movement.

O the platoon of red-winged pioneer women,

I fear the streets out there have shifted places, the gates of factories are broken, the ceilings of nighthouses have collapsed. However, do not expect any good from me. I am in no condition to agree to your offer mingling my

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

fragile body with death. Tell me, where should I quit your idea of me entering a small thread factory a worker? Keep the eyes of your hearts away from me. Being a worker is not on the same level with my dreams. I have run after getting hold of a life dearer than the one I held with my breath still smelling of mother's milk. But my spleen was in pains. My throat and chest has witnessed many a sob. Now I look back at far and faint images and fail to form a single emotion.<sup>75</sup>

(...)

Gülfidan the storyteller of illegality,

(...)

You have impressed our leader with words full of feeling, whispers and wails that trembled with faith until morning and have persuaded him to organize the children. You have caused us countless trouble. Now you regard working as a worker in a thread factory for the sake of continuing our cause, fighting like a militia as a minuscule mission.<sup>76</sup>

During this dialogue with the head of the organization, she feels like a *dumb worker*. She calls the administrative staff of the organization as *saints*. In addition to this, she evaluates the administrative staff as careerists and pro-property due to their positions within the organization.<sup>77</sup> This dialogue can be interpreted as a petit bourgeois criticism by Latife Tekin.

Before I forget. In all the torture stories that I have been told, there was a secret attitude of internalizing torture as a part of life. Most of them felt rageful that they were kept blindfolded for days...but the surprising thing is that, they complained about their hair which would not get straight and

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<sup>75</sup> Tekin, p. 10. "Ey kızıl kanatlı öncü kadınlar müfrezesi, Dışarıda caddeler yer değiştirmiş, fabrika kapıları kırılmış, gece evlerinin tavanları çökmüştür korkarım. Ama benden bir hayır ummayın. Teklifinize uyup kırgın bedenimi ölümle dalaştırarak halim yok. Söyleyin, küçük bir iplik fabrikasına işçi girmemi isteyen fikrinizden nerde çıkayım? Gönüllerinizin gözleri üstümden uzak olsun. İşçi olmak düşlerime denk değil. Süt kokulu soluğumla tuttuğumdan daha tazecik bir hayatı ele geçirme hayallerinin peşinden koştum. Ancak dalağıma ağı saplandı. Boğazım ve göğüs kafesim de hıçkırıklara sahne oldu. Şimdi uzak ve silik görüntülere bakmaktayım ve tek bir duygu bile oluşturmamaktayım."

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.11. "İllegalitenin masal yazarı Gülfidan,(...)Başkanımızı sabaha kadar duygulu sözler, fısıltılar ve inançla titreyen haykırmalarıyla etkiledin ve onu çocukları örgütlemeye ikna ettin. Sayısız bela açtın başımıza. Şimdi davamızın devamı için bir iplik fabrikasında işçi olarak çalışmayı, bir nefer gibi savaşmayı küçük bir görev sayıyorsun."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

would not be combed to one side. They apparently did not have combs and they were dragged to such a situation to make friction with broken fingers. The first question they posed me about torture was this: “Is this style new?” the answer to this question is worth considering, I guess. It felt such that, they were distressed about the method of torture rather than torture itself.<sup>78</sup>

Latife Tekin voices a criticism of the leftist organizations and revolutionaries from the inside. What is depicted in the above quotation is so important that there is a sharp criticism of the torture narratives. She accuses of some of the leftist groups of using the narrative of torture as an achievement or as an artwork of the movement: “How torture, with the soft curled sheet of night, can be transformed into a spectacular art show by our almighty class.”<sup>79</sup>

As emphasized in the previous parts of the study, the activists within the movement lost their agenda, which was to carry out a revolution after September 12 coup and this agenda left its place void of an agenda, hopelessness and fear. Most of the revolutionaries who escaped from the heavy atmosphere of the military take over sheltered in their homes. Back to the home is a common feature of the period after the defeat of the movement. Moreover, Tekin also asserts that the revolutionary atmosphere disappeared after the military intervention and in a sense the home and mothers were the only places in which they felt safe.<sup>80</sup> But she is still is not sure if

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.143-144. “Unutmadan. Bana anlatılan tüm işkence hikayelerinde, işkenceyi zaten hayatın parçası sayan bir tavır gizliydi. Çoğu, günlerce gözlerinin bağlı tutulmasına büyük öfke duymuş tabii... ama şaşırtıcı olan şu ki, en çok dikleştiği için yana yatmayan saçlarından şikayet ettiler. Yanlarında tarak yokmuş ve kırık parmaklarla friksiyon yapmak gibi zor bir pozisyona sürüklenmişlerç bana işkence konusunda sordukları ilk soru şu oldu: - Yeni mi çıktı bu stiller?...bu sorunun bir yanı düşünölmeye değör sanırım. Öyle geldi ki, işkenceden çok yeni olan işkence stillerinden dertliyidiler.”

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.59 “İşkence, gecenin kıvrımlı yumuşak örtüsüyle yüce sınıfımız tarafından nasıl da dönüştürölebilir görkemli bir sanat gösterisine.”

<sup>80</sup> Ece Ertem, “Romanlarda 12 Eylül Askeri Müdahalesi” (master’s thesis, Yıldız Technical University, 2006), p.106

there remains a place to go: “It is not certain whether we might find a place under a roof tomorrow or in the following days or not.”<sup>81</sup>

The master thesis of Ece Ertem also examines the September 12 literature through the agency of the novels which do not belong to a particular time period, like this study. One of the novels she analyzes is *Night Lessons*. She bases her analysis on the parallelism between Tekin’s biography and the process of Gülfidan’s organization. Ertem quotes Pelin Özer’s study on Latife Tekin and emphasizes that “in this process the author sees that there is an ‘unbelievable’ gap between the thoughts an activist organization dreamt of, tried to talk of and the people that were attempted at for organizational recruitment.” Tekin tells that in this process she was disappointed and lost his confidence in the organization and became unhappy.<sup>82</sup> Tekin says that she just wanted to form her own ideas and thoughts independent from the organization.<sup>83</sup>

There is a similar criticism of leftist organizations in the Kaan Arslanoğlu’s *Revolutionaries* (Devrimciler). For this reason the novel is important to illustrate the relationships between the revolutionaries within the despotic structure of the organizations. In fact, both writers, Tekin and Arslanoğlu, depict an organization which is rebuked by the hegemonic ideology in order to destroy the leftist movement. Yet, they differ in the sense that they do not aim to demolish the leftist ideology, they just criticize the organizational relations and show the effect of the

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<sup>81</sup> Tekin, p.39. “Yarın ya da gelecek öteki günlerde bir dam altı bulup bulamayacağımız belli değil.”

<sup>82</sup> Ertem, p.91. “Bu süreçte yazar, örgütün düşleyip, anlatmaya çalıştığı düşüncelerle, örgütlemeyle çalışılan insanların yaşamı arasında “inanılmaz” bir mesafe olduğunu görür.”

<sup>83</sup> Ertem, p.87.

despotic structure of the organizations in the defeat of leftist movement. Moreover, any misreading of these books is in a sense the production of the hegemonic ideology.

That is what Yalçın Küçük does in his book, *Küfür Romanları*. Anxious and sharp criticisms of Küçük stem from a shallow reading of *Night Lessons*. Although I agree with what he says about Ahmet Altan's *Sudaki İz* (Traces On the Water) in general, I disagree with most of the parts of his analysis of *Night Lessons*. Contrary to Yalçın's assertions, Tekin's novel opens a way for us to understand the defeat of the leftist ideology. However, Altan depicts a schematic and caricature organization in his novel, and he sets the novel against a historical background to give the characters a basis, but he just abuses this history. The main characters of the book are far from being real images; they are hollow, rootless, and hesitant.

On the contrary, there is a fundamental criticism of the leftist organizations in *Night Lessons*. Different from Küçük's implications it is a September 12 novel for its ability to represent the politics of organizations and the position of women within the leftist movement during the period.

Küçük also asserts that there is an emphasis on spirituality, and that is what the hegemonic ideology tried to impose. Additionally, he claims that Tekin uses the spiritual form just for commercial reasons.<sup>84</sup> However, the spiritual atmosphere of the book stems from the psychology of the character. It is a structural characteristic of the book that the usage of fragments reflects the fragmented and distorted time and space perception as a result of the oppressive and sharp atmosphere of the period.

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<sup>84</sup> Yalçın Küçük, *Küfür Romanları* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınları, 1988), p.93

According to Gürbilek, there is only one theme in *Küfür Romanları*, unhealthy art. Gürbilek asserts that Küçük, like Jdanov correlates Latife Tekin, Oğuz Atay or Robbe-Grillet's "unhealthiness" with "gleety monopolist capitalism" and he is diagnosed with schizophrenia and delirium. Gürbilek appreciates *Küfür Romanları* as a joke. For Gürbilek, Küçük makes a trendy analysis of these writers using the contradiction between healthy art and unhealthy art; that is to say, he uses a pathology discourse which was trendy in the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> Giving references to the works of Ayhan Songar, which was a popular name of the 1980s, Küçük accuses *Night Lessons* of "reproducing the fear" and he claims that for this reason the book was in demand. He calls *Night Lessons* "Schizophrenia Lessons" and describes the text and Latife Tekin as "fickle, in insane delusions, sarcastic and fabricator."

Latife Tekin presents the leftist leaders as demons.  
Latife Tekin introduces the leftists as people causing countless troubles.  
I feel ashamed for continuing to analyze *The Night Lesson*<sup>86</sup>

According to Gürbilek, Küçük's analysis, in which health becomes a criterion for evaluating art, is a shallow prescriptivism.<sup>87</sup> Maybe Küçük expected a kind of attempt at renewal and repair, yet the novel resists this kind of a demand.

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<sup>85</sup> Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak* (İstanbul: Metis, 2007), p. 82-83.

<sup>86</sup> Yalçın Küçük, *Küfür Romanları* (İstanbul: Tekin, 1988), p.93. A misspelling is already present in the original critical text. "Latife Tekin, sol örgütleyicileri şeytan olarak sunuyor.

Latife Tekin, solcuları, sayısız bela açan insanlar olarak tanıtıyor.

Gece Dersi'ni çözümlemeyi sürdürmek zorunda kaldığım için utanıyorum."

<sup>87</sup> Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, p.83.

*The Night Lessons* is not a novel of reparation anyway. It is more like a diary of a disintegration. If what we understand from reparation is diagnosis and treatment, question and answer, wrong and right, history and a lesson drawn, *The Night Lessons* is a poem which has strived not to represent these and pay the price for this striving with the broken pictures it had the words illustrate.<sup>88</sup>

Rather the text reflects anger. Gürbilek also underlines the expression of anger and revenge as the main feeling of the text.<sup>89</sup> The main attitude of the novel is to listen to its own voice and to make this voice heard. This desire makes the text a story of returning home, according to Gürbilek.<sup>90</sup>

Jale Parla underlines the fragmented structure of the text and states that language, time and space are also distorted and fragmented.<sup>91</sup> Another important point that partly I considered above is the great emphasis on the language. Gürbilek analyses the parallelism between the language and sociality is inspired by an anecdote of a friend of hers and then comments on the relationship between the language and the public sphere. She says that right after the socialist withdrawn from the public sphere and it lost its ability to gather different groups under the same roof; the language took socialism's place in a sense.<sup>92</sup> So it may be one of the reasons for the accusation of escapist literature. Such an interpretation has some parallelism with Sibel Irzık's analysis. Irzık also states that

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<sup>88</sup> Parla, p.356. "Bir onarımın romanı da değildir zaten Gece Dersleri. Daha çok parçalanmanın güncesidir. Onarımdan anlaşılan teşhis ve tedavi, soru ve yanıt, yanlış ve doğru, tarih ve dersse eğer, Gece Dersleri bunları temsil etmemeye azmetmiş ve bu azmin bedelini sözcüklere resmettirdiği kırık resimlerle ödemiş bir şiirdir."

<sup>89</sup> Nurdan Gürbilek, *Ev Ödevi* (İstanbul: Metis, 2005), p.46

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>91</sup> Parla, p.354.

<sup>92</sup> Gürbilek, *Ev Ödevi*, p.57.

The few compelling examples of September 12<sup>th</sup> literature that are not blind to their own roots in this simultaneous silencing and incitement to speech, defeat and liberation, incorporate that knowledge into their texts in the form of a love and hate relationship with their own literariness. In Latife Tekin's *Night Classes*, the young militant Gülfidan's affair with the political slogans that pollute her body is just a relationship of love and hate. On the one hand she associates both political and literary language with a loss of authenticity and an exercise of power, and longs for a language of the body that would never betray experience and fall into irrelevance. At a critical point in the novel, during her transition from militancy to authorship, the performance of a "torture dance," accompanied by "the unforgettable music of the tongue that could move only in inarticulate screams" becomes the model for such a language.<sup>93</sup>

According to Irzık, the literature is guilty, dark and closed since it is a comparison of two power forms, to hold the power of the property of writing and speaking is compared with the oppressive political power and power of organizations.

In this poetry of horror written on the human flesh, she hopes to find a referential force beyond the reach of the political and literary manipulations of language. On the other hand, *Night Classes*, the book that she gives birth to at the end of the painful convulsions of her body and consciousness, is a narcissistic, even playful multiplication of words, narratives, and selves with its intermingling of realistic and fantastic elements, the incantational rhythms of its language, its repetitions, conflation of tenses, disintegration of identities. The lesson learned at the "night classes" seems to be the guilt of the literary, both in its inadequacy and its excess."<sup>94</sup>

Searching for a new language means searching for a possibility to purify the violence. Additionally, as Gürbilek accentuates, it is only possible with language to overcome the crisis.<sup>95</sup> As the following quote indicates a new language can only renew the individual, recreate the history she has lost.

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<sup>93</sup> Sibel Irzık, "Military Coup Narratives and the (Dis)articulations of the Political in the Contemporary Turkish Novel", unpublished article, pp.14-15

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>95</sup> Gürbilek, *Ev Ödevi* p.58.

His body, shuddering as if he was being electrocuted, with his gaze that violence had blurred, was like a herald of a whole new language. Words, when petrified still, the first messenger of a totally different path where I could carry myself to.<sup>96</sup>

It is a book of fear and delirium, a total loss, and loss of language, space and history as a result of a traumatic event. It is *Night Lessons* ability to represent history and politics that makes the novel so important. Political organizations, their masculine structure and discourse, and the shock of the coup are represented within the text. The distorted language, time, history and space of *Night Lessons*, in other words, its style, make possible for us to see and understand the period. The individual's sorrow, its crisis gives clues of how to handle the entire crisis of society.

### Concluding Remarks

Both Adalet Ağaoğlu and Latife Tekin were opposing to the military intervention and the junta in power. Ağaoğlu was an activist and protesting the executions and capital punishments of the junta. She joined the intellectual's movements of the time.

Latife Tekin was a revolutionary activist just before the military intervention and she knew well the leftist organizations and revolutionaries. Moreover as it is seen in *Night Lessons*, she probably experienced September 12 depressively as an old activist.

Both authors and novels depict the heavy atmosphere of September 12 from different life perspectives; that is to say, *Non* is the experience of September 12 in the universities and the experience of intellectuals. Moreover, *Night Lessons* is a

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<sup>96</sup> Tekin, p.57. "Elektriğe verilmişçesine sarsılan bedeni, şiddetin bulandırdığı bakışlarıyla yepyeni bir dilin müjdecisi gibiydi. Sözcükler, yerinden oynatılamayacak kadar ağır birer taş kesildiğinde, kendimi taşıyabileceğim bambaşka bir yolun ilk habercisi."

criticism of the organizations and their moral values. There are both the criticism of the despotic organizations and the junta dictatorship. Old revolutionary Gülfidan imprisoned her house, reminds us the real prisoners of September 12. Gülfidan tries to recreate her self; she loses her political agenda like the prisoners of September 12. She shelters in the fiction in a sense; and the prisoners of the September 12 do it also. Literature functions as a reparation, confession, and resistance tool whereas it reestablishes the lost selves within the walls of the prison. Following chapter focuses on the literature's function in the prisons in 1980s.

## CHAPTER 3

### PRISON LITERATURE AND SEPTEMBER 12

I got shot  
In a desolate mountain pass  
At the time of the morning prayer  
I'm lying here  
Stretched out, drenched in blood...

I got shot  
My dreams are darker than the nights  
I try to find a good omen but it's no use  
They have taken my life before my time was up  
It would take volumes to tell my story  
A pasha sends an order in code  
And I get shot without due process, without an inquest

Brother, write all about my plight word for word  
Let others think it might be hearsay  
What I have in my shattered mouth  
Are not rosy teats  
But *dumdum* bullets.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> This is a part of "Otuz üç kurşun" poem of Ahmed Arif and translated by Talat Sait Halman, as "Thirty three bullets" and it is taken from An Anthology of Turkish Literature edited by Kemal Silay (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1996.)

Vurulmuşum  
Dağların kuytuluk bir boğazında  
Vakitlerden bir sabah namazında  
Yatarım  
Kanlı, upuzun...

Vurulmuşum  
Düşüm, gecelerden kara  
Bir hayra yoranım çıkmaz  
Canım alırlar ecelsiz  
Sığdıramam kitaplara  
Şifre buyurmuş bir paşa  
Vurulmuşum hiç sorgusuz, yargısız

Kirvem, hallarımı aynı böyle yaz  
Rivayet sanılır belki  
Gül memeler değil  
Domdom kurşunu  
Paramparça ağızımdaki...

Evaluations that are shaped around the question of why literature responded September 12 in silence are usually overlook the literary texts which are increasing in number day by day asserting that they are not “literary”. What I want to discuss is not whether these texts are literary or not. Contrary to common evaluations about September 12 literature, I suggest there is a September 12 literature, and the problem is not the absence of this literature, but it is a problem of seeing or not wanting to see. As a representative of the unseen, I want to look at prison literature, specifically the prison literature of 1980s which was written by the prisoners of the September 12 coup. While they were in the prison they wrote stories, poems, novels and some interview books which are partially fictional.

Contrary to the common assertions, I think that the prison literature of 1980s is the voice of September 12 that we could not hear and its body that we could not see. Inspired by Nurdan Gürbilek, I think these books, which are like refugees exiled from the sacred country of literature, and thrown to province, should be included within September 12 literature. For this purpose, I am going to introduce prison literature into the discussion, examining the works within the New Voices (*Yeni Sesler*) Series of Belge Publications; in other words, the poems, stories, novels, and memoirs of the series. Since in this work, my focus is on the novels of the period issuing September 12 coup d’état, I am specifically going to concentrate on the novels within the series. However, for the reason that the series continued publication until 1992, it is impossible to access all the books of the New Voices Series. Thus, I have chosen<sup>98</sup>, and analyze these three novels: A. Kadir Konuk’s *The*

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<sup>98</sup> The novels I can reach or determine the names are *Koyabilmek Adını* by Halil Genç, *Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol* by Hüseyin Şimşek, *Gün Dirildi* by A. Kadir Konuk, *Çözülme* by A. Kadir Konuk; *Sıcak Bir Günün Şafağında* by A. Kadir Konuk, *Dersimli Memik Ağa* by Haydar Işık, and *Eylül Şifresi* by Hüseyin Şimşek. Since I have found these names mostly from the lists at the end of each book, it is not possible to give exact publishing date for them.

*Day Resurged (Gün Dirildi)* and *The Rout (Çözülme)*, and Hüseyin Şimşek's *A Road with Many Divergences (Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol)*.

### Prison Literature of 1980s

It is usually evaluated as literature that calmly reflected September 12 in its pages despite some exceptions in the 1980s. With the word “literature” I indicate a body of literature which has the essential conditions of being apparent in the market; the chance to find a big publishing house, the chance to have distribution, so a literature which has a strong chance of reaching its reader, a reader who is waiting for work which is not in the margins, in a sense at peace with the conditions of the market. *Üç Beş Kişi* (Curfew) and *Hayır* (Non) by Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Gece* (Night) by Bilge Karasu, *Gece Dersleri* (Night Lessons) by Latife Tekin and *Issızlığın Ortasında* (In the Middle of Desolation) by Mehmet Eroğlu are the most prominent examples of the period. However, the works written in the prisons were not as lucky as the authors of the market. First of all, there were not any voluntary publishing houses except Belge and Alan Publications which would publish these works, even would evaluate them as literary.

When Belge Publications, with the partnership of Alan Publications, started to publish the works of prisoners, the description “prison literature” had negative connotations. That is, it was not counted as “literature”, and according to Ragıp Zarakolu, “prison literature” is used to humiliate these works, as if prisoners had no right to express themselves with literature.<sup>99</sup> Although the term “prison literature” is

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<sup>99</sup> Ragıp Zarakolu, “Yeni Sesler Üstüne Düşünceler”, Mahsus Mahal 1, no:1(January 2007),pp.52-54.

used in a disparaging sense, I use it just to underline the place of the production, just to facilitate signifying this literary production, and to underline its political meaning.

The Turkish equivalent of “prison” is not just one word; *hapishane*, *mahpus*, *mahpushane*, *hapishane* and *cezaevi*. Each word has a different connotation and context. For the term “prison literature”, *hapishane edebiyatı* or *cezaevi edebiyatı* is usually used. The expressions *hapis* and its derivation, *mahpus*, are more appropriate than *cezaevi*, since *cezaevi* or *ceza infaz kurumu* are the usages of the state, and the act of writing in the prison is opposite of the ideology of the state. Moreover, oppositional leftist writers have been implied by the term “prison literature” throughout the literary history. Nazım Hikmet, Sabahattin Ali, Ahmed Arif or Orhan Kemal are the best examples of writers who were in prison for a while during their lifetimes. Additionally, it must put forward that the literary experience being studied within this work belongs to oppositional leftist political prisoners and not the prisoners of the right wing.

If the newspapers or best-selling magazines of the 1980s are concerned, it is not possible to say that the prisoners of the coup were concerned or questioned their innocence or guilt. On the other hand the adversary magazines of the period such as *Yeni Gündem*, *Nokta* or *Milliyet Sanat*, one can easily find the news about the conditions of the prisons in which mostly bad and inhuman conditions were illustrated with some cases from the prisons such as Metris, Mamak and Diyarbakır.<sup>100</sup> The hunger strikes, torture news, and prisoners’ communication possibilities with the outer world and the aggrieved officials (*1402’likler*) of September 12 were also problematized in those reports. People who read these magazines were informed about the real reasons of the strikes and any detail about

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<sup>100</sup> “Diyarbakır, Mamak, Metris: ‘Kafamı Duvarlara Vuruyordum’ ”, *Yeni Gündem* 3, no 23 (11-17 August 1986), pp.10-17.

their prison lives such as what kind of rights they had in the prisons or had not. For instance, the political prisoner of September 12 gained some rights such as to have a pencil and paper, and to write after a process of strikes.<sup>101</sup>

Despite of the sharp voices of such magazines, mostly the media produced news against the political prioners and a great part of the society believed what was told about those prisoners. Yet, it should be noted that because of the censorship in and oppression of the media there was no chance to insist on oppositional news against the martial law excluding the courageous exceptions told above. Therefore, there was a wall which was stronger than the prison's which Şükrü Arın characterized as a rupture or a gap between the September 12<sup>th</sup> prisoners and rest of society.

As if we weren't the inhabitants of the same place or the citizen of the same country. In my opinion, this is not a "demarcation" that September 12 has made possible but vice versa. This is what I mean by the disintegration of the civil society anyway. The disappearance of the feeling of neighbourship, even worse, the replacement of that feeling by a weird alienation, or a xenophobia to be exact... We should therefore lean on this very feeling, phobia, on this mutual "disgust", –let us select a more politically correct word- this "avoidance"; think about the condition of how we fail –especially these days- to relate to each other's worries; thoroughly, without disgust or avoidance... The "healing" of both our literature and politics depends on this.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> "12 Eylül'ün Türk Edebiyatına 'Katkısı': Mahkûm Yazarlar", Yeni Gündem 4, no.86. (25-31 October 1987), p.56.

<sup>102</sup> Arın, p.8. "Aynı yerin sakini ya da aynı yurdun yurttaşı değiliz sanki. Bence 12 Eylül'ün zulmünün mümkün kıldığı değil, tam tersine 12 Eylül'ün zulmünü mümkün kılan bir 'yarılma'dır bu. Kamu'nun parçalanmasıyla kastım bu zaten. 'komşuluk' hissinin kaybolması, daha kötüsü, yerini tuhaf bir yabancılık hissine, daha doğrusu, korkusuna bırakması... Bizim işte tam da bu his, bu korku üzerine yürümemiz, şu birbirimizden 'tiksinme' –hadi biraz daha temiz bir sözcük seçelim- 'imtina' etme hali üzerinde durmamız; birbirimizin derdiyle –özellikle bugünlerde- bir türlü hemhal olamama hali üzerine düşünmemiz gerek; uzun uzun, tiksinmeden ve imtina etmeden... Edebiyatımızın da, politikamızın da 'iyileşmesi' buna bağlı."

It should be pointed out that the degradation of society caused by the dark atmosphere and the feeling of fear of the martial law was alienated and calmed society down. It was because of the fear of the possibility of being arrested and tortured like these prisoners that made people scary and backward. Moreover, this fear of sharing same fate and living the bloody atmosphere of the streets of the pre-coup period distanced away and blinded the society and made them turn their back on the political prisoners. Thus they became the solid symbol of the dangerous streets of politics. What Arın indicates in the above quotation with the loss of the solidarity of the neighbourhood is related to the fear and paranoia told above. Furthermore, to be a "fellow sufferer" with a period and to hear the voice of the political atmosphere of the 1980s, literature provides a double analyse chance both in the individual and social contexts. Since, literature is the meeting space of every kind of voice, especially the literary texts produced by the political prisoners during the 1980s will give a picture of the immediate reflection of the coup to the society and to the lives of individuals. Such an analysis also makes possible to hear the voices of the subalterns of the 1980s, a social history of the accused.

Although this study gives great importance to the literary works of prisons, common assertions about this literature are not so optimistic for the reasons counted above and for the reason that the "literature of prison" was evaluated as so documentary and so realistic, a realism which has no fiction at all. Since the prison literature of the 1980s is a literature written by the people who directly experienced the process of the violence of the coup, for Arın these works are important for their "historical value" rather than their "literary value". He argues that these texts have "a dose of reality that literature cannot bear." According to him, it is for this reason that prison literature is exiled from the lands of literature, therefore September 12

literature is not able to find a place in the centre of literature.<sup>103</sup> Although I agree with most of the analyses of Şükrü Argın, I disapprove of what he says about the prison literature for reasons which I will explain in the following paragraphs.

First of all, within the lines of his analyses, there is the belief that reality is not the issue of literature; in other words, when the traumatic or tragic incidences are concerned for literature, the texts narrating such incidences are far from being fictitious, and so they do not reflect the reality they in the reality themselves, so they are not literary but rather documentary.

While there was opposition outside of the prison as the political atmosphere of the 1980s allowed or enabled, despite the restrictive world of prison, literary writing experience was a tool of resistance, opposition, and more than that, it included a possibility of resistance and opposition in such a closed world. Hunger strikes and death fasts were the only means of resistance against the violence in prisons like Mamak, Metris and Diyarbakır. When September 12 literature is considered, the meaning and importance of the experience of writing in the prisons is ignored although it provided a new kind of possibility within the impossibilities for the leftist opposition in the 1980s.

Texts from prisons, that is to say poems, stories, novels and fictitious interview books, have been excluded from the field of literature on account of the fact that they are not “literary” and that is why we should refer to these texts when scrutinizing this period’s literature. These are the voices we should hear and these writers are the figures we should face.

#### Belge Publications and the New Voices Series

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

In 1985, the owners of Belge Publications, Ragıp Zarakolu and Ayşe Zarakolu, started to publish a series called “New Voices” (*Yeni Sesler*). This series was composed of mostly the fictional works of prisoners of September 12. The “New Voices” series were published from 1985 to 1991, the year when the law on the execution of sentences was declared which resulted setting September 12 prisoners free. Since there is not a reliable list of the books of the series, and it is not possible to find all the books of the series today, I can only determine the number of the books as 36, which is lacking as what Ragıp Zarakolu said about the number of the books in the magazine Mahsus Mahal.<sup>104</sup> Within these 36 books there are only seven novels written by A. Kadir Konuk (*Gün Dirildi -The Day Resurged*, *Çözülme-The Rout*, and *Sıcak Bir Günün Şafağında -At the Dawn of a Warm Day*), Hüseyin Şimşek (*Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol -A Road with Many Divergences* and *Eylül Şifresi -The September Code*) and Haydar Işık (*Dersimli Memik Ağa - Memik Agha of Dersim*). The novel is the rarest genre among the books of the New Voices series. *The Day Resurged* and *The Rout* by A. Kadir Konuk and *The September Code* by Hüseyin Şimşek are the novels that I evaluate in this study for the reason that they are typical examples of the prison literature in their approach to the September 12.

There were adversary articles in magazines voicing the prisoner’s situation and the conditions within the prisons focusing on and questioning some concepts such as crime, politics and human rights.<sup>105</sup> According to Öner Yağcı, one of the motivations for the prisoners to start writing was the smear campaign outside against

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<sup>104</sup> Ragıp Zarakolu, *ibid*.

<sup>105</sup> Ertuğrul Kürkçü, “Siyasal Hükümlüler, Toplum ve Devlet”, *Yeni Gündem* 3, no.31, (5-11 October 1986), p.32.

the September 12 prisoners.<sup>106</sup> The prisons of the 1980s had problems in the sense that human rights were abused and violence occurred. There were innumerable prohibitions such as radio, any musical instrument, radiators were banned and the number and the length of the letters were restricted. Prisoners were not permitted to enter the barracks until they had permission and to talk loudly was forbidden. Socializing, talking politics and not sleeping when the sleep time came were forbidden. Violent treatment made matters worse.<sup>107</sup>

Ragıp Zarakolu describes their intention to publish such a series in an essay called Thoughts on “New Voices” Series (“*Yeni Sesler*” *Üzerine Düşünceler*) in *Mahsus Mahal* in which imprisoned people’s essays and literary works were published<sup>108</sup>:

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<sup>106</sup> “12 Eylül’ün Türk Edebiyatına “Katkısı”: Mahkûm Yazarlar”, *Yeni Gündem* 3, no.31, (5-11 October 1986)p.57.

<sup>107</sup> Turgut Kazan. “1 Ağustos Genelgesi’nin Altında Yatan”. *Milliyet Sanat* 223, (1 Eylül 1989), p.4.

<sup>108</sup> Ragıp Zarakolu, ibid. ““Yeni Sesler” dizisine başlarken, Türkiye’nin 70’li ve 80’li yıllarda yaşadığı büyük toplumsal altüstlüğü, çarpıcı olayların, trajedilerin ve mitosların kitaplaşması için olanak sağlanması gerektiğini düşünüyorduk. Elbette bir “dıştan” ya da “içten” ayrımı koymak mümkün değildi bunu yaparken. Ama bu olağanüstü dönemin tamamlanışına, düzen bakışı ile, şematik ve kolaycı bir yaklaşımla eğilen birkaç ürün, bu konuda “içerde” olanlara olanak sağlanması gerektiğine bizi inandırdı.

Biraz da “kışkırtıcı” bir çağrı ile “Yeni Sesler” dizisini başlattık. Şöyle diyorduk: “Son günlerde ‘yanlış’ bir edebiyat anlayışı egemen oldu. 70’li ve 80’li yıllarda ülkemiz tarihinin en yoğun toplumsal bunalımını ve çatışmalarını yaşadı. Bu dönemi ne zihinsel ne de gerçek olarak yaşamayan, ya da yaşayamayan kimi yazarlar, o günlerin çarpıcı olaylarını ve trajedilerini ucuza kullanmak istedi. Yaşananları klişe tipler ve düzenin bakışıyla yargılayan bu yüzeysel yapıtlara büyük övgüler düzüldü. Yani içerde, kendini savunma olanağından yoksun insanlara karşı bir çeşit yargısız infaz uygulandı, örtülü biçimde... Biz bu tür bir edebiyata karşı mütevazı bir girişimle yanıt vermek ve farklı bir ‘belgesel edebiyat’ anlayışı ile dayanışma içinde olmak istiyoruz. Bu amaçla geçtiğimiz dönemin deneyimlerini ve gerçeklerini bizzat yaşayanlar tarafından aktaran yapıtlara bu dizimizde yer vereceğiz. Salt eleştirinin yeterli olmadığına, yaşayanların belli bir düzeyi tutturdukları yapıtlarıyla yanıt vermesi gerektiğine inanıyoruz. ‘Yazmayı’ da öğrenmek gerekiyor. Yalnız inceleme ve araştırmalarla değil, her türlü araçla, resimle, şiirle, romanla, öyküyle, oyunla ya da sinemayla tanıklıklar, deneyimler aktarılmalı. Bir ‘karşı tarih’in yaratımı, bu alanlardaki ürünlerden geçiyor. Daha önce de Türk edebiyatına birçok önemli yazarı armağan eden cezaevleri, bugün de bu geleneğini sürdüreceğe benzemekte.”

As we began the “New Voices” series, we thought that there was a need to create the opportunity for the social tumult, striking events, tragedies and myths that Turkey underwent in the 1970s and 80s, to be published. Naturally it was impossible to propose a difference between the “inside” and the “outside”, as we did it. However, a few products that leaned on this extraordinary period within the perspective of the system or with a schematic and lax approach have persuaded us to create opportunities for those who are “inside” at this point.

With a more or less “provoking” call, we initiated the “New Voices” series. We were saying: “In the last days, a “wrong” understanding of literature is in domination. Our country lived through the heaviest social depression and feuds of its history in the 70s and 80s. Some authors, who have not or could not experience the period neither mentally nor actually, attempted to abuse the striking events and tragedies of those days. These shallow works which judged the incidents within the perspective of the system, using stock characters received great appraisal. Meaning, those who were incapable of defending themselves inside were subjected to execution without judgment, in a concealed way...

We wish to reply such literature with a humble attempt and remain in solidarity with a different kind of “documentary literature”. For this reason, we are going to provide space for works which are expressed by those who have lived through the experiences and facts of the period per se. We believe that pure critic is not adequate, and those who have lived through the period should retort with their works of certain standard. “Writing” also needs be learnt. Witnessings and experiences should be registered not only with analysis or research but with every tool, illustration, poetry, novel, story, play or motion picture. The creation of a “counter-history” demands products in these spaces. The prisons which have bestowed so many important authors to Turkish Literature seem to be continuing this tradition.

Ragıp Zarakolu underlines the reactionary character of the works in the series and positions these works opposite the works which have depicted the revolutionaries as caricaturized images and he points out the importance of the series depicting the realities of the period. He thinks that these kinds of works made execution without judgement to of the imprisoned.

Osman Akinhay, who was put in prison after the September 12<sup>th</sup> coup, examines the “New Voices” series in *Birgün* and makes mention of the importance of this literary experience. As mentioned above, the 78 generation was acquainted

with literature in prison. Additionally, Akinhay emphasizes that the 78 generation started reading books of Turkish and world literature's pieces in the prison. Reading books is the only way to have a connection with outer world in a sense. "I guess the most important 'trauma' was 'the cause' being over. The 'vis-a-vis exposition' of many persons to the coup, as you have expressed it."<sup>109</sup>

Prisoners, most of them sentenced to death, started to write besides reading books although in prison conditions. The poem was the most produced literary genre in this period; moreover short stories, novels and fictitious interview books were also written. Poetry was common, since it was easy to get and to take them out of prison. Another reason of it is expressed in the first pages of the books of the series. The editor of the series or the person who writes on behalf of the Belge Publications tells that poems are the most common written form due to the social and political atmosphere of the period, and the emphasis is on the sensibility and awareness which according to the editor is the motive behind writing poem since it expresses the feelings in the best way. In the following lines of the same introductory piece it is said that there are some novels being edited to be published, and it is also emphasized that novel is the genre the lack of which is striking<sup>110</sup>.

After getting out of prison, Ayşe Zarakolu said that there was a necessity to make visible the prisoners of the September 12 coup d'état and, with Ragıp Zarakolu, started publishing the works of prisoners in the name of New Voices. Within the serial, the poems, stories and novels written by the prisoners of September coup were

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<sup>109</sup> Arın, p.14. En önemli 'travma sanırım 'dava'nın bitmesiydi. Senin ifade ettiğin gibi, birçok kişinin darbeye aslında 'bire bir maruz kalma'sıydı. (...) İnancın bizatihi kendisinin ortadan kalkmasıydı asıl travma. Ya da: İnancın öznesi değil, nesnesiydi tükenen."

<sup>110</sup> Fadıl Öztürk, *Suyu Uyandırın Sesim Olsun* (İstanbul: Belge, 1989), p.1.

published. The series was welcomed nationally and internationally. Through the agency of the International PEN Writer's Association, some works within this series were translated into foreign languages. Some writers also received support from this association. However, according to Ragıp Zarakolu, there was an opposition in national sense from the literary world. Writers such as Adalet Ağaoğlu opposed prison literature, saying "there is an attempt to create a literature of prison" and pointed out their intolerance distinctly.<sup>111</sup> It is like taking and possessing the literary space and since prison writers started writing in the prison, "real" writers had a tendency not to take those writers seriously. In a sense, the prison writer was a sinner who entered the sacred country of literature.

The first book of the series, *Bir Avuç Şiir* belongs to Ersin Ergün, who was a prisoner on trial with a possible sentence of death, and the second book of the series, *Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol* belongs to Hüseyin Şimşek; and third book *Gün Dirildi* belongs to Kadir Konuk. The latter ones were the first novels written within the series.

There is an introductory part on each book's first page which tells the aim of the series, and also sometimes gives information about the situation of the series; that is to say, the interest of the intellectual environment and people from the press and the media.

Some people who are not aware that they have been living in a country which has been transformed into an open prison, themselves being imprisoned in their own little worlds, not only failed to understand the importance and function of the "New Voices Series", but also wanted to, especially for the last ten years, degrade this "resistance literature" products with the phrase "prison literature." Whereas the "act" of writing was one of the important areas in the "resistance" in our country. The "New Voices Series" has functioned well, be it in the human rights struggle or opening

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<sup>111</sup> Ragıp Zarakolu, *ibid.*, p.52. "Bir cezaevi edebiyatı yaratılmak isteniyor"

doors to new writers. Publishing houses which embraced our approach also opened their doors to new writers.<sup>112</sup>

As the quote indicates, there is a political function of the series which should not be underestimated; its function is to make people aware of the violent treatment in the prison and its role in encouraging people to write. There is an emphasis on the writers of the series; they were the people who experienced September 12 at first hand and they are arrested, tortured, and imprisoned. Accordingly, the books within the series are based on the realities and experiences of September 12.

Another striking point in these introductory sections is the presentation of the New Voices Series as an example of exile literature of Turkey, taking as its example exile literature of Germany in the era of World War II for the reason that some writers of the series were the people who had escaped from prison and were taken refuge in countries such as Germany, Belgium, France and etc. For the editor, the series would provide solidarity with the people who are in exile.<sup>113</sup>

Fadıl Öztürk is one of the writers of the series who produced poems. His poems depict the violent atmosphere of the post-September 12 era and usually focus on the revolutionaries' dreams and their defeat. In the poem above, he expresses his anger at the military order, and criticizes the ministry of justice, which is under the control of the military. As the last lines indicates, many prisoner of September 12, after they were released, got involved the armed struggle against the state usually

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<sup>112</sup> Birol Keskin, *Albatroslar* (İstanbul: Belge, 1990), p.1. "Özellikle son on yıldır, açık bir cezaevine dönüştürülen bir ülkede yaşadıklarının farkında olmayan, küçük dünyalarına hapsolmuş kimileri "Yeni Sesler" dizisinin önemini, işlevini anlamadıkları gibi, bu "direniş edebiyatı" ürünlerini "hapisane edebiyatı" deyimi ile küçümsemek istediler. Oysa ülkemizdeki "direnişin" önemli alanlarından biri de yazma "eylemi" idi. "Yeni Sesler" dizisi, gerek insan hakları mücadelesinde gerekse kapalı kapıların yeni yazarlara açılmasında önemli bir işlev gördü. Bizim yaklaşımımızı benimseyen yayınevleri de kapılarını yeni yazarlara açtılar."

<sup>113</sup> Ahmet Sefa, *Lavrion Öyküleri* (İstanbul: Belge, 1990), p.1.

with the Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK. He dreams a hopeful future, and like the other writers of the series, children are the forerunners of the future.

Another writer of the series is Birol Keskin; he also produced within the walls of the prison. In *Albatroslar*, which consists of short stories, he tells us in short story form the life in the cell and prison with an impressive style and language. He depicts the life in the prison and presents the difficulties and it is striking to see that he also writes about the holocaust depicting the Jewish people in gas rooms with panic and fear. Writing about the holocaust and its torture techniques, in a sense, Keskin makes an analogy between the prison of September 12 and the gas rooms and cells of the Nazis during the World War II. He attaches a note of Nadir Nadi, saying "isn't it similar today's world with a huge gas room?" at the end of a story.<sup>114</sup> He also evaluates the life outside the prison as an open prison and he describes the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s even referring to Ahu Tuğba and Turgut Özal in the stories written in a letter form. Moreover, he mentions the armed activities and the psychology of both the activist and people on the streets. The second half of the book is written in a letter form, and it finishes when he is freed. Actually, it is his expectation, and it signifies that writing is a process of desire of wholeness, a process of completing and gaining back his life projection.

Last but not the least, I want to make mention of Nevzat Çelik, who is an important figure for the prison literature and for the period. Although his books were published by Alan Publishing, we should pay attention to his poetry, and the connotations of his poetry for the sake of prison writers. It should not be forgotten that Alan and Belge Publishing Houses were partners at that time.<sup>115</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>114</sup> Keskin, p.34. "Hayal gücümüzü biraz zorlayarak bugünkü dünyamızı kocaman bir gaz odasına benzetemez miyiz?"

<sup>115</sup> Ragıp Zarakolu, ibid.

there is a need to examine the poems of Ersin Ergün, Nevzat Çelik and Emirhan Oğuz within this serial. They became the voices of the 1980s along with Ahmet Kaya songs. Their poems were used as lyrics by Ahmet Kaya. Here, there is one of the famous poems of Nevzat Çelik which is composed by Ahmet Kaya and became well known:

## DAWN SONG

1

don't ask for me here mother  
don't ask my name at the door  
stars have fallen on your hair  
don't pull them off mother  
don't cry

my face is shaved for a long time  
i've waited, my eyes have waited for the dawn  
as my hands lengthen  
waiting agog for the wind  
mother the death i've missed  
while passionately dying to live<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Nevzat Çelik, *Şafak Türküsü* (İstanbul: Alan, 1985), 52-57.

## “ŞAFAK TÜRKÜSÜ

1

beni burada arama anne  
kapıda adımı sorma  
saçlarına yıldız düşmüş  
koparma anne  
ağlama

kaç zamandır yüzüm tıraşlı  
gözlerim şafak bekledim  
uzarken ellerim  
kulağım kırışte  
ölümü özledim anne  
yaşamak isterken delice

4

sıcak omuzlar değerken omzuma  
buz üstünde yürüdüm yıllar boyu

as friendly shoulders have touched mine  
i've walked on ice for years  
with flags and folksongs  
when broke away from their breasts to that perfect life  
they fired bullets on my brow  
arduous at the agora  
i was one of the crags  
where eagles settled and fled  
i died and again revived  
at sunny and sunless nights

for the sake of blissful future  
in the name of freedom, in the name of bread  
i confronted dogs with bloody tails  
hiroshimas would not revive and return so that  
so that children would not lie with deaths  
                naked on the necks of their wooden horses  
in order for children not to eye voraciously  
on behalf of brotherhood  
in the name of the bird in the air the fish in the sea  
i've walked for years

As Ragıp Zarakolu claimed, the poems of Nevzat Çelik, popularized Ahmet Kaya, on the other hand with the help of Ahmet Kaya, Nevzat Çelik's poem, became well-known. As mentioned above, the intolerant reactions against prison literature

bayraklar ve türkülerle  
kopunca memelerinden o mükemmel yaşama  
kurşunlar sıktılar alınım  
açık alanlarda ağır

kartalların konup kalktığı  
yalçın kayalardan biriydim  
ölüp dirildim yeniden  
güneşli güneşsiz akşamlarda

mutlu yarınlar adına  
özgürlük adına ekmek adına  
üstüne vardım kuyruğu knlı itlerin  
dirilip dönmesin diye hiroşimalar  
tahtadan atlarının boynuna çıplak  
ölümlerle yatmasın diye çocuklar

aç gözlerle bakmasını diye çocuklar  
kardeşlik adına  
havadaki kuş denizdeki balık adına  
yürüdüm yıllar boyu”

influenced these writers. According to Zarakolu, Nevzat Çelik with the fear of not being taken seriously by the literary world, at the beginning was annoyed about his poems' fame as Ahmet Kaya songs. It is like a fear of remaining separate from the sacred country of literature. In Nurdan Gürbilek's expressions, it is the return of the repressed in a sense. The underestimated and ignored literature of prisoners, in another field became visible, the repressed voices of prisoners return as a popular song.

Poets like Nevzat Çelik were supported by significant literary men such as Can Yücel, who is also a poet and regarded as one of the main political characters of the Turkish literary world. In the preface of *Şafak Türküsü* (Dawn Song), Can Yücel underlines that people like Nevzat Çelik are neither the victims nor the criminals of the past events, just components of a fait accompli, which seems unbelievable.<sup>117</sup>

Soysal Ekinci is one of the well known poets of the series. In his second book *Çağrı*, there is a preface written by Yılmaz Öner, who was a translator and philosopher. In this preface, he indicates that "art is to sympathize while questioning him/her self"<sup>118</sup>

September 12 affected children also. A great number of children grew without their fathers or mothers. Writing was the only means of communication among the families.<sup>119</sup> Letters made people acquainted with writing and accordingly with literature and fiction. Some stories within the book are written in the form of

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<sup>117</sup> Can Yücel, "Tamburanın Teli," in *Şafak Türküsü* by Nevzat Çelik, (İstanbul: Alan, 1985).

<sup>118</sup> Yılmaz Öner, "Önsöz," in Soysal Ekinci, *Çağrı*, (İstanbul: Belge, 1990), p.6.

<sup>119</sup> "12 Eylül'ün Cezaevleri: Mektuplarda Süren Hayat" *Yeni Gündem* 3, no.10, (12-28 May 1986), p.13.

letters and there was a child magazine composed of letters called “Letters to Alev,”<sup>120</sup> which was written by Alev’s father and some friends to her from the prison. Thus, there was a lively writing atmosphere in the prison.

It is possible to say that the New Voices serial has had a mission to witness the oppression of September 12 coup and it constituted a documentary literature in this sense. Additionally, the interview book consisting of Metris Prison’s prisoners interviews written by Mecit Ünal, who was condemned to death, corresponds to serial’s documentary feature. In addition to this, it is striking that it is not just an interview book; rather, it is a fictional work using real interviews.

The major contribution of the serial was its support of the prison resistance. Books were not only a means of freshening the memories of September 12, but also they became an information channel to the outside world which depicted and gave an idea about the prison life and its conditions with a literary language. Literature gave a chance and possibility for prisoners to express themselves explicitly within the hunger strikes and death fasts, although the news about the prisons was usually precluded: Resistance with writing.

To conclude, Şükrü Argın’s evaluations about September 12 literature give us a last chance to evaluate prison literature:

It’s to no purpose to expect from those people of letters, who didn’t experience but solely watched that September as bystanders, to narrate September 12. We have no choice but to wait for those, who had experienced all of these personally, to ‘sink their hearts’ to the level of narrating us what they had gone through; and to find us sufficiently valuable to be narrated what they had experienced.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> “Cezaevinde Hazırlanan İlk Aylık Çocuk Dergisi”, *Yeni Gündem* 4, no. 91, (29 November - 5 December 1987), pp.34-35.

<sup>121</sup> Argın, *ibid.*, p.15. “12 Eylül’ü, o Eylül’ü yaşamamış, sadece dışarıdan izlemiş edebiyatçıların anlatmasını beklemek boşuna. Bütün bunları bizzat yaşamış olan insanların

Last, I want to emphasize that prison literature was created by the people who lived September 12 and in this sense, it is possible to say that September 12 created its own literature in the prisons to a large extent. Moreover, since it created a resistance space, and questioned the 78 generation, coup and after more or less and since it became the lost voice of the sacred country of literature, there is a need to listen to the voices from the prison.

### Analyses of the Novels

Since you've decided to write a novel, first and above all become a novel worker.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar<sup>122</sup>

Konur Ertop who is a well known critic of the 1970s and 1980s, evaluates the novels written in the prison in *Milliyet Sanat* and he appraises that those novels and authors are influential when they mention the struggle in which they were involved, workers, the life in the prison and the oppressions they faced, the violence they felt these novels depict them plainly. He especially underlines the books of Belge Publications, A. Kadir Konuk's *Sıcak Bir Günü'nün Şafağından* (At the End of a Warm Day) and Halil Genç's *Koyabilmek Adını* (To Call Its Name).<sup>123</sup>

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yaşadıklarını anlatmaya 'gönül indirmeleri'ni; bizi, yaşadıklarını anlatmaya değer bulmalarını beklemekten başka çaremiz yok gibi.”

<sup>122</sup> Fethi Naci, *100 Soruda Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1981), p. 335. “Madem ki roman yazacaksın, evvela her şeyden evvel bir roman işçisi ol.”

<sup>123</sup> Konur Ertop, “Romancılar farklı kişilikler arasından son on yılın olaylarını sorguluyor,” *Milliyet Sanat* 231, (1st January 1990).

### *The Day Resurged* and The Dream and Nightmare of Revolutionaries

According to Fethi Naci, workers had not been the subject matter of the Turkish novel for decades. He attributes its reason to writers with a “lack of a social and historical view” to see the social problems of the working class.<sup>124</sup> He also says that despite the fact that there are many village novels (*köy romanları*) in Turkish literature which depict the daily life and the problems of the villagers and the farmers, it is not common to see worker novels due to the fact that writers have not got so much experience with workers like they have in the villages. For Naci, it is for this reason that since Orhan Kemal worked in the factories, he could depict the lives and problems of the workers in his novels.<sup>125</sup> Thus, writers who are successful at expressing the petit bourgeoisies in their novels such as Sevgi Soysal, Adalet Ağaoğlu and Pınar Kür, idealize the working class people, and they are far from expressing it actually.<sup>126</sup> What we see in this novel is contrary to this analysis. On the one hand there is the experience, and on the other hand, there is the unrealistic depiction of both working class and revolutionaries.

*The Day Resurged* is A. Kadir Konuk’s<sup>127</sup> first novel and it is also second novel<sup>128</sup> and third book of New Voices Series. *The Day Resurged* is the story of

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<sup>124</sup> Fethi Naci, p.332.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>127</sup> Journalist and writer A. Kadir Konuk was born in 1947 and became a village teacher. He studied education in İstanbul University between the years 1973-6. he left the School in 1976 for political reasons became a revolutionary activist. He worked in several jobs such as peddler and house painter. He arrested in 1982 and put in prison. He stood trial and was sentenced with capital punishment. Before he was executed he escaped prison and took refuge in Germany. He has been still living in Germany. He is known with his novels, short stories and documentary books.

<sup>128</sup> First novel within the series A Road with Many Divergences (Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol) belongs to Hüseyin Şimşek and it is the second book of the series.

Savaş who is a revolutionary at the end of the 1970s. The entire story is based on his development, that is to say, we can examine the book in three parts: the incidences preparing Savaş to become a revolutionary, in other words, the process of becoming conscious of his class; and the second part can be briefly summarized as the process of his participation to the organizational activities and the leftist movement. The third part is the most realistic part of the book which depicts the heavy and violent atmosphere of the prisons and police stations just after the September 12 coup. My partition does depends not only on the plot of the novel, but also the change in the language and the perception of the social world.

In the first part, Savaş's family and the neighborhood in which he grew up are introduced, focusing on his father, Cumali. In these pages, it is specifically emphasized that Cumali is a hard working man who is a house painter. Cumali's "big and calloused" hands are mostly mentioned point, his proletarian qualifications are highlighted and the readers are informed about the class conditions that prepared Savaş to become one of the revolutionaries.

The novel opens with a childhood memoir of Savaş which gives a hint about his personality and perception and his coming transformation from an official to a revolutionary. In this memory, little Savaş, holding his father Cumali's hand, goes to an office and Cumali asks the permission from his boss to demand one more week to finish the painting of the building. The process of going to the boss is given in detail in three stages: just before they enter the room, in this stage Cumali is like "a giant who is difficult to be reached", his words signify a proud and right worker. Savaş asks his father the meaning of "justice is the basis of the property" and Cumali replies to him that "justice is ours and property is theirs." The second stage is Cumali's changing attitude after they entered the boss' room. Just before they enter

the room he buttons his jacket up, and enters the room sheepishly and little Savaş observes his father bewilderedly. And in the third stage, after they leave the room, the changing of the image of Cumali in Savaş's eyes is described. He is now "stooped, exhausted, poor and sulky". These are Savaş's first observations and questions regarding injustice, and step by step he will be conscious about his class and take his side. This is the most important and strong characteristic of the novel, be able to depict the development of the characters realistically; that is to say, it grounds the development of each character well and that is different from many novels about September 12.

Aware of the injustice in the world, he is lonely at his job. His office mates are so different from him; he is against all kinds of injustice and dishonesty. For instance, it is especially underlined that he accepts bribery by no means, and for this reason he is like an antithesis of the other officials. Also he always accuses them of not being aware of the daily social and political issues such as wars, meetings, and price hikes. When he mentions such things, his office mates whose names are not mentioned give answers like, "Never mind! If you are full and your back is strong, so don't think otherwise!"<sup>129</sup> These two officials are also mere images of the apolitical section of society.

There are often transitions from the opening time of the book; that is to say, Savaş's discontentedness his social and political position to his past, including his childhood and youth. The first part of the book has circular time; that is to say, the starting point or the present moment of the book, Savaş sitting in his office is the first and the last point of this circular time. While Savaş is an official and displeased with

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<sup>129</sup> A. Kadir Konuk, *Gün Dirildi* (İstanbul: Belge, 1987), p. 12.

his life and the unconsciousness of the people, through long and intense flashbacks we learn the process which prepared Savaş to become a revolutionary.

In the pages Savaş's childhood which was at the end of the 1950s and the beginnings of 1960s, is described. The changing city life, the changing appearance of the streets, architecture and also the changing economic structure are given. Phaetons left their places to taxies and the changing structure of the streets complicated artisan's work.

One day he meets one of his old friends, Sinan, who is a revolutionary and activist in the movement and Sinan persuades him to get involved in the movement. Until this point, the circular time of the previous part is dissolved and we witness the life of revolutionary Savaş until his execution. The turning point for Savaş is the visit of Sinan who is his blood brother whom he has not seen for years and now (in the second half of the 1970s) is involved in the leftist movement. The real intention behind the visit of Sinan is understood in the coming pages; he has come to include Savaş in the movement, to make him participate in his organization. The conscious Savaş met in the office, in the streets and at home makes him ready to get involved in a movement; all the conditions are present for him to become organized. First of all, in these lines we learn about Sinan's past, and the process that led him to become politicized. Within this process while Sinan becomes politically conscious, Savaş turns his back on politics and he became a victim of his false conscious. He just loses his belief in society and feels him and wants lonely to change the old and settled order of the social relations. Savaş describes his life as that of an insect and it reminds us of the machine like life of Gregor Samsa, who turns into an insect. Sinan persuades Savaş, and he also gets involved in the organization. After this decision or the enlightenment of Savaş the second part of the book starts. I think this part is a bit

utopist in the sense that it is narrated like a never-never land. In addition to this, the language changes and it has a different structure until the third part.

On the one hand, the polarization of the society at the end of the 1970s is depicted properly; the politics are everywhere, in the streets and within the daily conversations. Politics determine the relationships; the positions taken within society are certain, people are either leftist or rightist. There is no escape; if someone in your family is taking sides, you are also counted as the side your family member's taking. After Savaş decided to be involved in the movement and organized, his family is also labeled "leftist". Savaş's brother Mustafa, is not accepted for the police organization although he has passed all the exams by the reason that his brother is a revolutionary and leftist. The distinction between the left and right and their unconnectedness to each other is well depicted. One day he runs into one of his childhood friends, Okan, but they are two people belonging to different worlds, Okan is an ultra nationalist militant and he is taking side in counter side. Okan thinking of their past, invites him to get involved on their side, however, it is the moment their positions prevent them from having a dialogue any more, and they are enemies henceforth. It is a reflection and example of the real life also. The end of the 1970s witnessed the same political polarization in society; even the coffee houses were different.

Okan looked for a while at the girl who passed by. He turned to Savaş when she disappeared. "Come, have a cup of tea with me." They had arrived at the café *they* always hung out in. He knew well they'd say "he was scared" if he didn't enter. He did. Those inside started murmuring and grumbling when they saw him with his newspaper. Savaş sat beside the wall. He dragged a second chair by his armchair. The garçon brought the tea. They exchanged glances with Okan. The garçon winked as if he was saying "What's up!". Okan nodded. Savaş ignored the sign making. "Want to play okey<sup>130</sup>?" said Okan. "I don't play any games." "You don't play games. You don't hang around with women. What are you, a monk?" "What good are those you counted?" "What not? These are the joys of life. What would

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<sup>130</sup> A game similar to Rummikub, widely played in Turkish coffeehouses.

you know? You were just like this when you were a child too. Just reading. I had no education. But am I hungry? I live better than you do. I dress better, I eat better.” “With whose money?” “My father’s and mother’s. Whoever it is; I seek the thrill. Aren’t all?” “Not for me.” “Uh, yeah. You’re different. That’s what I’ve been saying. What do you care about the others? You have a good status. If you just wanted it, you could strike it rich in two or three years. Sign a paper, get the money. That’s all.” “The nationalist idea you defend decrees so I guess?” “What nationalist idea?” “You were just saying it.” “Don’t bother yourself about that now. That business is different. Is it a crime one cares about one’s own benefits?” “If someone else’s rights are at stake, it’s even beyond crime. It becomes a sort of theft.” “Why theft? It is the captain that guides the sail.”<sup>131</sup>

The other side, the ultra nationalist right militants as in the quote is depicted as molesting women and girls. Like Okan, their head, Nizam is also a molester who years ago molested a girl and was put in prison. The dirty past of these militants, their bandit like and rowdy characteristics are the counter elements which determines and separates them from the leftist militants. They are so insistent to involve the people on their sides, even they apply violent actions like beating, annoying, menacing or swearing people in the streets. Its most cogent evidence is the parts expressing their violence against Savaş. A group of rightist militants leading Nizam and Okan, attack Savaş, and they beat him. Several days later Savaş meets with Nizam alone, but he does not attack him, he lets him go. This is an example of the

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<sup>131</sup> A. Kadir Konuk, *Gün Dirildi* (İstanbul: Belge, 1987), pp.75-6. “Okan yanlarından geçen bir kıza uzun uzun baktı. Kız gözden kaybolunca Savaş’a döndü. “gel bir çayımı iç.” Onların sürekli oturdukları kahvenin önüne gelmişlerdi. Girmese “korktu” diyeceklerini iyi biliyordu. Girdi. İçeridekiler elinde gazetesiyle onu görünce mırıldanıp, homurdanmaya başladılar. Savaş duvarın yanına oturdu. İkinci bir sandalyeyi koltuğunun yanına çekti. Garson çaylarını getirdi. Okan’la bakıştılar. Garson “ Ne iş!” dercesine göz kırptı. Okan başını salladı. Savaş işaretlemeyi görmezden geldi. “oKey oynayalım mı?” dedi Okan. “Oyun oynamıyorum.” “Oyun oynamazsın. Kariya kıza takılmazsın. Papaz mısın mübarek?” “Yararı ne o saydılarının?” “Olmaz mı? Dünyanın zevkleri bunlar be. Ama sen ne anlarsın? Çocukken de öyleydin zaten. Varsa yoksa okumak. Ben okumadım. Aç mıyım yani? Senden iyi yaşıyorum. Senden iyi giyinip, senden iyi yiyebiliyorum.” “kimin parasıyla?” “Babamın, anamın. Kimin olursa olsun. Ben dalgama bakarım. Herkes de öyle değil mi?” “Benim için öyle değil.” “ Ha.. tabii. Sen başka. Ben de onu diyordum ya. Sana ne elin atındna devesinden. Yerin iyi. Istesen iki üç yılda köşeyi dönersin. At bir imza ver bi binlik. Hepsı bu.” “SEnin savunduğun milli anlayış böyle diyor galiba?” “Ne milli anlayışı?” “ Az once anlatıyordun ya.” “Katma onu şimdi. O iş ayrı. İnsanın kendi çıkarlarını düşünmesi suç mu yani?” “ Eğer başkalarının haklarına el uzatılıyorsa suçtan da öte bir şey. Bir nevi hırsızlık.” “ Niye hırsızlık olsun? Gemisini yürüten kaptandır oğlum.”

characteristics of the leftist activists; they do not support violent actions, and they try to solve the problems discussion.

It is expressed that the political polarization affects mostly the family life in the novel. Families are not willing for their children to be activists; they usually think that the politics is a matter of the politicians, not the ordinary people. Savaş's father Cumali is also uneasy with the politically engaged life of Savaş, and after he has been beaten by the rightist militants, he shows his anger, setting fire Savaş's books. This quotation depicts not only the relationship of a father and a son determined by the politics, but also it is a picture of many family relations and the understanding of politics by the ordinary people.

If Cumali remained silent at the face of an event, it meant something was going to happen. He was definitely going to do something. And he did. It was some time over the event. One evening when he returned home from work, his little brother told him that all his books were burnt. Sayme and Cumali had burnt them all in the oven for good. He went crazy over it. For the first time he stood up to his father. "What have you won?" he said. "Hitler had books burnt too. Did you ever think you're like him?" "Shut up, you son of a gun!" screamed Cumali. "Don't get me started. How could you regard me on the same level with that dog? Ok. No reading anymore. You had your education and earned your bread enough."

(...)

"Son, I'm telling you these for your own good." he said, lowering his voice. "What's my own good? Weren't you the one who wanted us on the side of the righteous than the strong? Wasn't that what's right? These were also written in the books you burnt with your own hands. What's the meaning of what you have done now? Do you think I will not read again, since you have burnt them? If my existence in this house bothers you, let me go father. I didn't do anything wrong. I don't suppose I will either..." "Who told you to go, idiot?" screamed Cumali, feeling half guilty. "I don't want you to be getting into trouble. Some day they'll shoot you, just like that. Is it worth it?" "It is. Of course if I have really done something." "Well, fine. As you like it. But I know well. At the end of all this, I'll be, we'll be the ones who suffer." <sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp.82-3. "Cumali bir olay karşısında susmuşsa bir şeyler olacka demekti. Mutlaka bir şeyler yapacaktı. Yaptı da. Olayın üzerinden epeyce zaman geçmişti. Bir akşam işten döndüğünde küçük kardeşi bütün kitaplarının yakıldığını söyledi ona. Sayme ile Cumali oturup bir güzel

Savaş's father Cumali is like the voice of the parents of politically engaged generations. The problem with the family, with home, is the most referred to and discussed issue. When the children are fighting for revolution, for the sake of society, against the inequalities in the world, the families find them dreamers and adventurers, and accuse them of being ignorant of the realities of the world. Additionally, there is a faint opposition to this theme as it is approached in such films in this novel. In other words, it has a different point of view. Family is not a real obstacle to being politically active, although the parents do not support the movement evidently, they also do not encumber their children at all. Their worry stems from if something harmful happens to their children. In the novel, Cumali and the other members of Savaş's family help Savaş and Meral and look after their little child Sinan. As I said before it is a part of this perfect world, as I expressed it never-never.

Since Savaş is a leftist and the other officials in his workplace abstain from politics thinking of their individual benefit, Savaş irritates them with his idealistic and honest attitudes, so they report him to the boss accusing him of political propaganda in the work place, and Savaş is fired. His dismissal leads the way to what

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yakmışlardı sobada. Hırısından deliye döndü. İlk defa diklendi babasına. "eline ne geçti?" dedi. "Hitler de kıştapalrı yaktrımıştı. Ona benzediği düşündün mü hiç?" "Sus eşşoğlueşşek!" diye bağırdı Cumali. "Başlatma beni. Ulan o itle beni nasıl bir tutarsın? Tamam. Okumak yok bundan sonar. Okudun ekmeğini kazandın yeter."

(...)

"Oğlum ben senin iyiliğin için söylüyorum" dedi sesini yumuşatarak. "Nedir beniim iyiliğine olan? Sen değil miydin güçlüden değil haklıdan yana olmamızı isteyen? Doğru olan bu değil miydi? Elinle yaktığın kitaplarda dsa bunlar yazıyordu. Şimdi yaptığının anlamı ne? sen yakınca ben okuyamayacak mıyım yeniden? Eğer bue vde yaşamam seni rahatsız ediyorsa gidrim baba. Ben yanlış bir şey yapmadım. Yapacağımı da sanmıyorum." "Sana kim git deid ulan?" diye yarı suçlu bağırdı Cumali. "Ben başın belaya girsin istemiyorum. Bir gün çekişp vuracaklar. Değer mi?" "değer. Tabii gerçekten bir şeyler yapabilmişsem." "İyi ulan. Ne haltınız varsa yeyin. Ama iyi biliyorum. Bunun sonunda yine acıyı ben, biz çekeceğiz."

I claim about the narrative and the language. Starting from that time, the language unconsciously takes on the tone of a dream world of which remembrance makes the narrator happy and proud. It is like telling a glorious past, present and future altogether; since the time is so indefinite, it indicates a timeless history.

After he is fired from his job, he starts working with his father and he becomes one of the working class people. In this part, what I call third part, the narrative and the language signifies a glorious future. It is like setting free the self from all of its ties and the individual responsibilities, and taking power from this freedom. It means taking on the responsibility of the world and society, forgetting self and becoming a worker or becoming undistinguishable part of society as a whole.

After he was fired, he had learnt all the intricacies of shoe polishing in a short time. In the first days, his soft hands were swollen and blistered from continuously working with emery, lime and holding the spatula. When the sores healed, new ones appeared in his palms. For days he could not close his hands. There were times when he could not hold paper and pen with his fingers which were full of holes from the lime. He'd then smile bitterly. He'd tease his hands saying "So, did you see that my chef's hands?" No matter how much he washed his hands with soap, the white of the lime would not be washed off from the webbing between his fingers. It seemed to him that his hands were bigger and heavier. When he clenched his fists, he felt the power in his hands increase, getting a nice feeling from it. He was proletarianizing.<sup>133</sup>

In these lines, there is an emphasis on the working class, and becoming proletarian is exalted. A socialist overview is dominant to the novel, that is to say,

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p.144. "İşten atılmasından sonra boyacılığın tüm inceliklerini kısa sürede öğrenmişti. İlk günler sürekli çalışmaktan yumuşamış elleri zımparadan, kireçten, spatula tutmaktan patlamış, yaralar su toplamıştı. Yaralar kapanınca yeni yaralar oluşmuştu avuçlarında. Günlerce avucunu kapatamamıştı. Kirecin oyuk oyuk yaptığı parmaklarıyla kağıdı kalemi tutamadığı günler olmuştu. nacı acı gülüyordu o zaman. "Ya... gördünüz mü şef ellerim" diyerek elleriyle dalga geçiyordu. Ellerini ne kadar yıkasa sabunlasa da kireç beyazı parmak aralarından bir türlü gitmiyordu. Sanki büyümüş, ağırlaşmıştı elleri. Yumruklarını sıktağı zaman ellerindeki gücün arttığını hissediyor, hoş bir duyguya kapılıyordu. İşçileşiyordu."

*The Day Resurged* is a socialist realist novel, highlighting the value of laborers and the working class.

In the following pages, Savaş becomes an activist and he takes part in putting up posters on walls at night and even he participates in armed political actions against the ultra nationalist right's militants. Meanwhile, he starts dating one of his friends from the organization, Meral. Meral is the girl he always waited to share ideas and thoughts with, and his feelings. Their relationship also reflects an idealism that they share same agenda, to revolutionize. Their love has a meaning only with the revolution, which is their ultimate goal. Since Savaş's father is so worried and anxious to him because he is involved in the actions and he does not consult his father to marry Meral, they have a row, and he quits his job, and leaves the home. After that he and Meral marry, and Cumali forgives him and he holds a wedding. Meral and Savaş leave the city after the wedding and move to another city, presumably İzmit. Here, he starts working in a factory. These parts also reflect his class consciousness and for the final degree the need to organize the workers. For the first time, he experiences the differences between an industrial worker and a construction worker.

Although he knew it in theory, Savaş now learnt the difference between the construction worker and the industrial worker better, and lived it in practice. It was as if, the industrial worker was a wolf and the construction worker a lamb.<sup>134</sup>

Industrial workers are more conscious of their position and their class than construction workers, and the parts narrating the conversation between Savaş and workers, and the parts narrating his life after he married and became a worker reflect

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p.195. "Savaş teorik olarak bilmekle birlikte bir inşaat işçisiyle sanayi işçisinin farklarını artık daha iyi öğreniyor, pratikte yaşıyordu. Sanayi işçisi kurt, inşaat işçisi kuzuydu sanki."

an idealistic world. In that sense it can be read as utopist. The language also expresses this dreamy and ideal world, the never-never land of socialism. The characteristics of the language make this ideal never-never; it just holds the possibility and hope of such a world, but conscious about the distance between this dream and the real conditions of the world.

They discussed different topics with workers of higher standards. After those discussions he'd feel the bliss in his body, of persons who have accomplished their tasks with success. This would reflect unto his domestic life and there wouldn't be the slightest problem in the house. Meral was also working tooth and nail in her own occupation. In a short amount of time, they had earned the love of all their friends. At home, they wouldn't tell anything related to their own branches to each other.<sup>135</sup>

This quotation also signifies the relationship between Meral and Savaş as a married revolutionary couple. As said above, the present and the future of their relationship depends on their ultimate goal, to organize people to eliminate the inequalities, and for the sake of the revolution of the laborers.

In the factory, he organizes other workers to attend labor union meetings and he becomes one of the most reliable and active members of the union. Since there are people who do not support his thoughts and intentions, he is fired from the factory, but it is offered a role as leaders of the union because he is loved and supported so much by the workers.

The third part comes with a rupture in the narrative; suddenly we are thrown into the street in the middle of an armed action of Savaş and unaware of what the real reasons for this attack are. The reader is not informed about the reasons behind this

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p.197. "Daha ileri düzeydeki işçilerle daha değişik konuları tartışıyorlardı. O tartışmalardan sonra işini başarıyla tamamlayan insanların rahatlamasını duyuyordu bedeninde. Bu, evdeki yaşamına yansıyor, evin içinde en ufak bir olumsuzluk olmuyordu. Meral de kendi işinde dişiyle, tırnağıyla çalışıyordu. Kısa zamanda bütün arkadaşlarının sevgisini kazanmışlardı. Evde kendi alanlarına ilişkin hiçbir şeyi anlatmıyorlardı birbirlerine."

attack and also we cannot learn the real agenda of the organization. The secret behind the organization is never clear, it is behind a curtain, murky.

Actually, we want to take both of you here. But you have to go to the other side and come back. You will hand over your relations too. In the meanwhile we will take care of the business here. “It is better for me to wait till then. Let’s not risk it.” “Hıdır will be waiting for you.” “When?” “The following day.” “Okay. What will I do later?” “When you are done with there you will work in the city, not the villages. A private job. We will talk about it when you come back.”<sup>136</sup>

Although we are informed about the basics of the organization, we never feel its body; it is just mythic and hidden from us. I insist that the reason behind the expression of this unspoken murky organization is due to the conditions in the prison and it is very much related to the overexertion not to talk under torture, since losing consciousness and talking during torture are the most fearful things. It can be asserted that a fear of belonging to the real world determines the narrative, fear makes the narrative close and it gives it a murky and dreamy characteristic. In addition to this, the prisoner authors never experienced the outer world of the 1980s and thus they are still in a close network, the mythical narration of the organization is thus related to the feeling of the state of belonging to the organization. It is as it was once upon a time, should be kept hidden, and there is still a distance to criticize the organization, since they are still in them. However, September 12 novels written in the 1990s and the 2000s try to depict the leftist political organizations with their many facets, both their aims and their negative sides.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.,p. 236. “Aslında ikinizi de buraya almak istiyoruz. Ama önce öbür tarafa bir gidip gelmen gerekecek. İlişkileri devredersin. O arada da biz buradaki işleri hallederiz.” “O zamana kadar bekleyeyim daha iyi. Boşuna bir riske girmeyelim.” “Hıdır seni bekleyecek.” “Ne zaman?” “Öbür gün.” “Tamam. Sonra ne yapacağım?” “Oradaki işler bitince burada ilde çalışacaksın. Semt değil. Özel bir iş. Onu gelince konuşuruz.”

<sup>137</sup> Kaan Arslanoğlu’s *Devrimciler* (İstanbul: İthaki, 2006) and Şöhret Baştaş’s *Koşarken Yavaşlar Gibi* (İstanbul: Kanat, 2007) are two of the best examples of such an overlook to the organization and leftist thought.

After the armed attack against Savaş, since he is wanted by the police, he disguises himself, escapes, and comes to Istanbul. Meanwhile, Istanbul, like many other cities, is under the martial law, presumably just before the 1980 coup. In Istanbul, it is a well known fact that torture is common among the police and the revolutionaries know that if they are arrested they will be tortured. Thus, torture is normalized in the minds of the people, it is like a part of being revolutionary.

Savaş is arrested with a forged identity card. After a police raid, he is tortured while in custody in the police station. No-knock raids are well known during the process at the end of 1970s and after the coup.

The door was ringing over and over again. As soon as it opened they just crammed into the rooms. They were pointing their sub machine guns at the pregnant woman.<sup>138</sup>

Right after the raid, he is taken to the police station and he is tortured and is bastinadoed. The emphasis is on the cruelty of the police when they are torturing to prevent the diffusion of the voice of Savaş, they play a radio. The parts narrating the torture are more realistic than the other parts and they are expressed in detail. The tense is also changing in these parts from the *-miş*, to *-di*. Former indicates a dreamy and fairy tale-like expression, and the latter indicates a time that is experienced by the narrator her/himself. This part, and the last seventy pages of the book describing the custody, interrogation, torture, the process of the judging, resistance and violence in the prison are narrated with the latter tense, and what remained from the glorious days is the fear, sorrow, and proud.

The days following the September 12<sup>th</sup> coup are also pictured in the novel; identification controls at city entrances and daily surveillance by the armed forces in

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<sup>138</sup> A. Kadir Konuk, *Gün Dirildi* (İstanbul, Belge, 1987), p.222. “Zil üst üste çalınıyordu. Kapı açılır açılmaz hepsi birden odalara doldular. Ellerindeki hafif makineleri gebe kadının üzerine doğrultmuşlardı.”

the streets. The impossibility of making any movement is well depicted; there is no escape from the military takeover. Moreover, Savaş and other revolutionaries cannot escape from the martial law, and they are arrested. The widely mentioned night incursions of soldiers and police of many September 12<sup>th</sup> narratives including the memoirs, and fictional works, is also apparent in this novel. A group of soldier assaults the houses of the marked political people, and from that time, the violent atmosphere of the coup welcomes them. About twenty pages of torture under custody are narrated and it does not end until Savaş is put into a cell in which he is waiting for his execution. Every kind of torture techniques is pictured as being used, in a language which expresses an incidence that happened just hours ago. The language changes in these lines, loses its literary worries. The issue tells itself. There is no need to use smart words; the action makes the influence.

The distinctive characteristic of the parts narrating torture from other torture narratives is that the novel does not focus on just the torture; in other words, the real intention of the novel is not just narrating it, but it also shows the reason and the understanding of this process. Furthermore, not only is torture under custody told in the novel, but also the ongoing process of torture in prison is pictured in detail which is crucially important to understanding the resistance and reactions in the prisons in the 1980s. Moreover, we must keep in mind that the violent treatment in the prisons influenced the daily politics from the 1990s.

Bad treatment in the prison and the solidarity among the prisoners are depicted in detail, including the function of the architecture of the prisons, and some well-intentioned soldier guardians. As told in several memoirs, the blue prison uniform was the incarnate of the resistance because the prisoners were forced to wear it.

While he was working as a painter or in the factory, he would willingly wear the same kind of dress with the same kind of fabric. That dress was like the symbol of labour. However, he had never thought that he would be *forced* to wear this dress one day. Why was he resisting anyway? The problem was not only a piece of clothing, certainly. The reasons why he was forced to wear was the significant point. The reasons were to demean people, standardize them into one category and to degrade them ultimately. Wanting to wear this clothing while working was a completely different matter.<sup>139</sup>

The blue prison uniform is provocative, since it is like swearing the values of the prisoners, converting the color blue into a symbol of discipline and suppression mechanisms invoke the reactions among the prisoners reasonably.

“Look here buddy. If you do not want to get hurt you will obey the rules of this place. It is forbidden to sit, to stand, to drink water, to piss, to sleep or to smoke without our permission. You will call everyone commander. You will not sit down when your commander is passing by. When you ask something you will show your attention. It is forbidden to speak in a hoarse voice. You will shout out. Do you understand?” “No, I don’t.” Just then he realized the blue dress that he had worn. He could not believe how he could have grown so absent minded. The dress was still on him. No sooner he had clawed the dress than he tore it.<sup>140</sup>

A non-commissioned officer informs and warns Savaş about the rules and regulations of the prison in this quote. The meaning and the function of the blue prison uniform is explicitly expressed in the above and below quotations. It turns into a kind of cold war between the officials and the prisoners.

It was forbidden for him to contact the attorney. They told him, “You can only see him on the condition that you wear the clothes!”. “You will have no more troubles once you wear the dress. Wear the dress, and you can see

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p.273. “Boyacılık yaparken, fabrikada çalışırken aynı renkten, aynı kumaştan elbiseyi seve seve giyiyordu. İşçiliğinin sembolü gibiydi o elbise. Ama bir gün o elbiseyi kendisine zorla giydireceklerini hiç düşünmemeşti. Neden direniyordu peki? Sorun bir bez parçası değildi elbet. Onun neden giydirilmek istendiği önemliydi. İnsnaları aşağılamak, tek tip yaratılar haline sokmak, onurlarını kırmak için o elbiseler giydirliyordu. Onu çalışırken isteyerek giymek ayrı şeydi.”

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.275. “Bak aslanım. Eğer canının yanmasını istemiyorsan burada kurallara uyacaksın. İzin istemeden oturmak, kalkmak, su içmek, sıçmak, uyumak, sigara içmek yasak. Herkese komutanım diyeceksin. Komutan önünden geçerken oturmayacaksın. Bir şey sorarken, isterken esas duruşunu göstereceksin. Alçak sesle konuşmak yasak. Bağıracaksın. Anladın mı?” “Anlamadım.” O sırada üzerinde duran mavi elbiseleri farkettiler. Bu kadar dalgınlaşabileceğine dünyada inanmazdı. Elbiseler halen daha üzerindeydi. Elini attı. Pantolonunun önünden tuttuğu gibi yırttı.”

your wife and children. Watch the TV. Read the newspapers”. But first he would have to wear the clothes, then call each of them “Yes, commander”, show that he gave all his attention, do whatever he was told, and eventually destroy his own personality. He would have to face his wife and children as a conformist.<sup>141</sup>

It illustrates the unlawful treatments and applications of the junta government in the prisons in detail. The years following the September 12<sup>th</sup> coup witnessed the execution of 50 people, and Savaş is depicted as one of these people who shared this fate. The parts telling the unlawful process of the trials in the court-martial are realistic and not romanticized. At the end, Savaş is executed. Before he hung up, he declares his purpose, which is changed into a dream.

“All my life I have lived for the well being of my country and for the independence of my nation, and I am dying for the same cause. Sooner or later, the repressed will win the victory.” said he. He climbed on the stool. Before the executioner pulled the stool away he shouted, “Death for fascism, freedom for the commonwealth”. He kicked the stool...<sup>142</sup>

The last words of Savaş, probably were very similar to the last words of the people executed after September 12.

### *The Rout and the Guilt Conscience*

In the introductory page of the book there is some biographical information about A. Kadir Konuk telling that he was inside the political movement, than sent to prison after September 12<sup>th</sup> and was sentenced to death. Just before his execution, he escaped from prison with the help of a doctor and went abroad. It is striking to see

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.280. “Avukatla görüşmeleri yasaktı. “elbiseyi giy görüş” diyorlardı. “elbiseyi giy, rahat et. Elbiseyi giy, eşini, çocuğunu gör. TV seyret. Gazette oku.” Ama önce elbiseyi giyecek, ardından hepsine “komutanım” diyecek, esas duruşu gösterecek, ne derlerse yapacak, kişiliğini yok edecekti. Kişisiz biri olarak çıkacaktı çocuğunun, yarinin önüne.”

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p.302. “Halkımın mutluluğu, ülkemin bağımsızlığı için yaşadım. Yine onun için ölüyorum. Zafer er geç ezilenlerin olacaktır!” dedi. Tabureye çıktı. Cellat tabureyi çekmeden “Faşizme ölüm, halka hürriyet!” diye bağırdı. Tabureyi tekmeledi...”

for the first time the statement of “the journalist- writer” for Konuk. Since *The Rout* is his second novel, and he also has a story book within the series, he is mentioned as a writer. As I said in the introductory pages of prison literature, writers of New Voices series had not been interested in authorship before they were sent to prison and also authorship is not an occupation for those writers if we think the writers also writing on the coup such as Adalet Ağaoğlu, Latife Tekin or Bilge Karasu. This was also one of the reasons of the reactionaries against the series’ writers for not being really “writers”. It is true that they had not been interested in act of writing before they were imprisoned but this does not mean they can not be writers.

*The Rout* is Konuk’s second novel and it is the 7<sup>th</sup> book of the series. In the introductory page it is said that he presents the torture issue, which reached extreme numbers with and after September 12<sup>th</sup>. He, as it is expressed in the introductory section, deals with both psychological and physical facets of torture. It is said that the book has had many positive reactions abroad and has been translated into many language including Danish and Dutch.<sup>143</sup>

The striking point about *The Rout* is its well-organized and accomplished style, which distinguishes it from the other novels of the series. It is a novel of fear, paranoia and guilty conscience. The paranoia of being caught turns into the fear of being killed and the desire to calm down the physical pains brings the fear of confession. Entire narrative is established on this fear of confession under the torture. It is a novel of suffering.

The epigraph at the top of the first page of the novel makes us aware of the main problematic and the feeling of the novel, which turns the novel into a narrative of guilty conscience.

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<sup>143</sup> A. Kadir Konuk, *Çözülme* (İstanbul: Belge, 1998), p.1.

People cannot come out of all struggles, which they have entered through their lives, victorious. In life, there are defeats, whatever their reasons are. The important thing is to take lessons from defeats, to eliminate the factors that might cause defeat before entering new struggles. The biggest wound is not the one gashed by the weapon. The biggest wound is slashed on the person's honor due to one's weakness and by one's own hands. And it is hard to be fixed. But not impossible, as long as sufficient efforts are made to fix that wound.<sup>144</sup>

What kind of a wound is this? Who made this wound? Is the weakness that the epigraph is indicating a real weakness? It is the stroke of September 12<sup>th</sup>, which makes us think about the actual meanings of wound and weakness. The narrative indicates a last resort, an exit for a world being collapsed which is dependant on the freedom of the self. Moreover, this self is under pressure and it is under threat of being destroyed.

As the above quote indicates, the entire novel is based soothing a conscience, and in that sense it is successful. It is not possible to claim that the novel is a narrative of conscience which is isolated from the time and locality. The trauma bodily and mentally felt during the torture process is narrated so successfully.

Torture is a kind of estrangement, thus it is one of the reasons that torture narratives are perceived as being alien to September 12<sup>th</sup>. Torture is the moment that entire world, human voice and the body seem to be alien together. Moreover, it is the moment when conscience and conscious are lost. On the other hand, it is the moment that conscience and conscious gain importance and meaning at the same time. Hence, to speak and confess at the moment of the torture is an act that is normal and indispensable, and to be silent is important at the moment of the torture for the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.5. "İnsanlar yaşamları boyunca girdikleri bütün kavgalardan galip ayrılmazlar. Yaşamda nedeni ne olursa olsun yenilgiler de vardır. Önemli olan yenilgilerden dersler çıkarmak, yeni kavgalara girmeden önce yenilgiye neden olabilecek etkenleri yok edebilmektir. En büyük yara, en büyük silahına çığı yara değildir. İnsanın kendi zayıflığı sonucu onurunda kendi elleriyle açığı yara en büyük olandır ve onarılması oldukça zordur. Ama olanaksız değildir. Yeterki o yarayı onarmak için gerekli çaba sarfedilsin."

tortured not to give his or her the sole world to the tormentor. To speak under the violent atmosphere of the torture thus can be forgiven by the other members of the organization or society and it is a wound that can be relieved.

*The Rout* is this kind of a narrative; a story of relieving the wounds and desire to get involved in society. I think that it is much more than that; it is the narrative of a guilty conscience. *The Rout* opens with an ordinary car's description; it is underlined that it is just an ordinary car we can see it anywhere. Step by step, like Oğuz Atay's *Waiting for the Fear (Korkuyu Beklerken)* story, it makes us nervous; it makes us feel the same fear and paranoia. This fear is not the result of waiting for the unknown; on the contrary, it is the result of knowing what will happen. In this regard, the protagonist's waiting is so real that can not be fiction. In the post-September 12<sup>th</sup> period, the night incursions of the military and the police, the treatment of the officials are all known facts as is in this novel. The nameless protagonist of the novel is aware of exactly what will happen to him, he will be arrested, taken into custody and tortured like many others. Therefore, he is nervous and afraid of the moment he will be arrested. He is sure that one day the white colored Renault automobile which is the symbol of the plain-clothes policemen of the post-coup era incursions will come to the door of his apartment. Only the day and time of the incursion is unknown. Waiting, paranoia and fear isolate him as if time has stopped or tied in a knot, in a moment. He is as if stuck between the tick tock of time, in a timeless moment.

The appearance of the automobiles is so ordinary that it is like a part of the daily routines. Moreover, the protagonist is nameless and that makes the story a common problem.

It was impossible for such a car in sight not to attract attention. But perhaps nobody gave notice to anywhere. Nowadays nobody wanted to get into

trouble. Those who signed as witnesses generally ended up as criminals. Even if they had beaten someone on the road, nobody would have approached and broken up the fight. People had become fully alienated from each other. And as days passed, they become more and more estranged.<sup>145</sup>

When the expected automobile comes the officials invade the house. Then the peaceful house suddenly turns into a trap with no escape. As the above quotation indicates, society is desensitized, and the quote informs us of the changing attitudes of the society. As it can be remembered, Aysel, the protagonist of Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Hayır* novel was complaining about the insensitiveness of the society. In this quote, emotionally and politically numb people are concerned, but the narrator also understands the reason behind this desensitized attitude. Estrangement from others and society is one of the main thematic of September 12<sup>th</sup> novels, and it is a result of the oppressive and violent atmosphere of post-September 12<sup>th</sup> coup period.

When the police incursion has occurred, the protagonist seems cool-headed, such that, he criticizes them, even he feels himself strong against them.

These men could not talk without shouting, silently. Always riding roughshod over the other. Always swearing, offensive. They counted themselves the strongest. The warmth of the guns at their waists made them the more bully. They also took some heart from the law they leaned on but always trampled on. It was as if they were the ones who ruled the world. They were above everything. They were reprimanding. Therefore they had to show they were the king.<sup>146</sup>

The protagonist compares the officials with the brigands of the fairy tales who take their power from their weapons and force. However, his self-confidence

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.13. “Böyle ortalık yerde duran bir arabanın dikkat çekmemesi olanaksızdı. ama belki de kimse haber vermemişti bir yerlere. kimse başına bir bela gelsin istemiyordu şimdilerde. tanık olarak giden suçlu olarak çıkıyordu çoğunlukla. yolda birini dövseler kimse yanaşıp ayırmıyordu. insanlar birbirlerine yabancılaşmışlardı iyice. ve günden güne daha da yabancılaşıyorlardı.”

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.41-2. “Bağırmadan, alçak sesle konuşamıyordu bu adamlar. Hep dikine dikine. Hep küfür, saldırgan. En güçlü kendilerini sayıyorlardı. bellerindeki silahların sıcaklığı onları daha da kabadayı yapıyordu. arkalarını dayadıkları ama hep ayaklarının altında gezdirdikleri yasallıktan alıyorlardı güçlerini biraz da. dünyayı onlar yönetiyordu sanki. her şeyin üstündeydiler. hesap sorucuydular. öyleyse en kral olduklarını belli etmeliydiler.”

falls into pieces when the question if he will confess anything under torture comes to his mind. After that point of suspicion, step by step, the protagonist cannot escape his tragedy, despite the fact that he tries to transgress. After he is arrested, he is taken into custody and tortured. He is subjected to inconceivable torture techniques and loses his conscienceness, although he resists.

It wasn't important whether the age changed or not, regarding the inquisitor or inquisition methods. They were just the same. In fact, inquisition methods were improved. New forms were added. More painful, more degrading. Even so, inquisition reserved its quality of being a test for the prisoners. "To be or not to be" did not lose its meaning since Shakespeare. Now passing this test was what was important. There was only one thing he would do: Silence his whole body. Desensitize every part to the smallest cell. To raise all prickles and withdraw to your shell. Not to show one smallest part. To live but not to let recognize. Here's all: TO REMAIN SILENT. To remain silent like the dead in the grave.<sup>147</sup>

*To be silent as a corpse in the grave* means to kill yourself, to end all your mental activities; it is a different kind of violence, a self-violence. The silence of many prisoners of September 12<sup>th</sup> may be related to this self-pressure.

*The Rout* strikingly depicts torture under custody. After he has confessed some names from his organization, he is faced with his fiancée and another revolutionary friend. He, exhausted and ruined, suffers from a guilty conscience and is put in prison. Although he refuses his confession for the reason that he has signed the deposition under the torture, he thinks he has no right to be involved in any organization or any group. The character, who is put in the opposite position from our protagonist, who does not confess anything, is glorified and he is depicted as a

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p.48. "Çağın değişmiş olması önemli değildi sorgucu ve sorgu yöntemleri açısından. onlar yine aynıydı. hatta daha da geliştirilmişti sorgu yöntemleri. yeni biçimler eklenmişti. Daha fazla acı veren daha fazla şaşıltan. Yine de sorgu, esirleir için bir sınav olma özelliğini koruyordu her zaman. "To be or not to be" Şekspir'den bu yana anlamını hiç yitirmemişti. Ve şimdi önemli olan bu sınavın kazanılmasıydı. Bir tek şey vardı yapacağı: Tüm vücudunu susturmak. En küçük hücrelerine kadar her yerini acıya duyarsızlaştırmak. Tüm dikenlerini çıkartıp kabuğuna çekilmek. En küçük bir yerini göstermemek. Yaşamak ama farketmemek. Hepsini bu: SUSMAK. Mezarındaki bir ölü kadar sessiz olmak."

hero. The protagonist excludes himself in the prison due to his guilt conscience until the other man is put in the same ward. The man is again glorified, and forgiving is as if dependent on the other actor's initiative who does not confess anything under the torture. The right of forgiving is attributed to the man who does not confess anything is very much related to the guilty conscience, which is the focal point of the novel. The world that the protagonist lost can be regained by the agency of another actor of the same process who has succeeded in being alien to the time and the place he was in. This man makes him get involved in society again seeing his regret, and the attempt to correct his mistakes. After that point, he is involved in society and even his fiancée forgives him at the end of the novel. The novel closes with a happy ending: He is released and comes together with his beloved.

### *The September Code by Hüseyin Şimşek*

Hüseyin Şimşek was a prisoner of the September coup. He was taken into the custody in 1981 and he was kept under custody for 111 days. After that he was put in Metris Prison and stayed there until 1985. He worked as a journalist for several magazines and newspapers including *Yeni Gündem*, *Nokta*, *2000'e Doğru*, *Özgür Gündem*, *Aydınlık*, *Aktüel*, and *Tempo*. He has written novels, poems and some research books for several publishing houses including Belge, Alan, and Yön.<sup>148</sup> He took asylum in Austria in 1998 and he gained refugee status in 2000. He lives in Austria and engaged in publishing.

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<sup>148</sup> For further information about Hüseyin Şimşek's life and the works you can visit the site: <http://www.huseyin-simsek.com/tr/nav-top/biyogafi.html>

*Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol* (1988) is his and the series' first novel. The novel focuses on the resistance in the prisons after September 12. The plot is set around a 31-month-hunger strike in the prison. Şimşek prefers using a poetical language because of the fact that the incidences caused hunger strikes are tragic and traumatic, so it is the best way to express such a trauma and psychology of the actors in a lyrical language.<sup>149</sup>

*The September Code* ( *Eylül Şifresi*) is his second novel. Like the other writers of the series he focuses on the revolutionaries' new life after the coup and the changing society and its political implications. *The September Code* depicts the years following the coup. With the help of flashbacks and the collage technique he draws a picture of the pre- and post-coup lives of the revolutionaries. Additionally, flashbacks make the time cracked and fragmented. Different from the classical plot, fragmented time pieces make the reader focus on the important facts, situations or events. And it also helps to designate the trauma and shock.

Different from the other novels of the series that analyzed, the novel's historical reference is distinctive. From the beginning, the reader is put in an atmosphere of the post-September 12 decade, in other words, the 1980s. The first page of the book summarizes briefly the atmosphere of the 1980s, both a local and global context:

On the other hand, the psychopolitical son of the *Pasha* says “Intervention was obligatory”. Meaning the *Indian Cock*\* crows late and mistakenly with a push\*. The lawyer from Yozgat shows evidence of torture he underwent in the police station. The public prosecutor from Fethiye has caught husband and wife tourists strip naked in the sea, continuing his fight against the “indecents”! While the tourist woman, who is a physiotherapist, is thrown into prison without any paying of notice to her nervous

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<sup>149</sup> *Ayrımı Bol Bir Yol*. Available [online]: <http://www.huseyinsimsek.com/tr/yazilar/article/7/ayrimi-bol-bir-yol.html>

breakdown, her husband is stil struggling not to lose his tongue. Amnesty is stil on the agenda. (...)

(...) according to one source, the bestseller of the Septemberian period's fifth year third week is an essay: "No more Hiroshimas." In such a period the cunning politician gives advice:  
Politics is the enemy of justice.<sup>150</sup>

This quotation indicates an interpretative word choice and makes the reader see the historical reference from the eyes of the narrator, from the perspective of his ideology. As the above quotation signifies, on the one hand, there are some politicians who are trying to legalize the coup and trying to make society distant from the politics, asserting that politics in civil life is enemy of the justice. One of the main characters of the novel, Selim, is introduced with his justification of these words. Right after, we learn that he is in unrequited love with Meral, who is apolitical and apathetic in her life choices.

The novel centers on the revolution and love. In a sense it is approaching the characters in a political context in the pages focused on the revolutionary activities of the characters and in an individual context when it centers on the love between the characters.

The mentality of Meral's parents reflects the ordinary man's mentality and their words and thoughts about Selim and other prisoners support the claims of Sibel Irzık, Osman Akınhay, and Şükrü Argın that September 12 created gap between the

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<sup>150</sup> Hüseyin Şimşek, *Eylül Şifresi* (İstanbul: Belge, 1991), p.5. "Paşanın psikopolitik oğlu ise, "müdahale zorunluydu" diyor. Yani Hint horozu, dürtüklemeyle geç ve yanlış ötüyor. Yozgatlı avukat emniyette gördüğü işkencenin izlerini basına gösteriyor. Fethiye savcısı, karı koca turisti denizde çırılçıplak yakalamış, "edepsizler"e karşı savaşmaya devam ediyor! Bir fizyoterapist olan bayan turist, sinir krizleri geçirmesine aldırış edilmeden sürüklene sürüklene hapisaneye atılırken, kocası, olup bittin karşısında hala küçük dilini yutmama çabasında.

Genel af hala gündemde. (...)

(...) Bir kaynağa göre Eylül dönemin beşinci yılının üçüncü haftasının en çok satan kitabı bir deneme: "Hiroşimalar olmasın." Böyle bir dönemde kurt politikacı akıl veriyor: "Politika adaletin düşmanıdır."

families and prisoners, prisoners and the society. With the help of the inner monologues of Saniye Hanım (Meral's mother) we learn that she is not so pleased to see Hale, who is the politicized friend of Meral. According to Saniye Hanım, a woman who is involved in politics is a sinister person. Politics, according to Saniye Hanım, is a "trouble" from which children be kept away. Thus the news of the evacuation of Selim does not interest and make Saniye Hanım happy. Although Meral goes to university, she becomes a person away from the "trouble", that is to say politics. Meral's petit bourgeois morality distances her from Selim. She evaluates the torture news as "nauseous" and the women activist as "mannish."<sup>151</sup>

There are two kinds of women with whom he falls in love and he always compares them. Meral is the symbol of the depolitized youth and petit bourgeoisie, and Aygöl, with whom he falls in love in the later parts, is the symbol of political companionship. There is a contradiction in the novel that must be stated here. On the one hand, the difficulties of being a woman in the political organizations are reflected and women activists are glorified; on the other hand, by comparing two women figures, the novel repeats the viewpoint of the dominant moral norms.

The second half of the book is the story of Aygöl, who is a politically engaged teacher in Diyarbakır. This chapter starts with news from Diyarbakır Prison, which had the most violent conditions of the period. The second half of the book is about the Kurdish movement right after September 12.

After the assassination of one of her students she resigns from her job. The mayor of the city threatens her and she leaves the city and moves to İstanbul. In İstanbul she disguises herself and becomes Ayşen. Since it is the post coup era, and every activist of the organization is in disguise, Selim becomes Seyit.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p.71.

The third chapter is established on the relationship between Seyit and Ayşen and the guerillas, activists and the organization is told. These parts of the book focus on the structure of the organization and its despotic structure are criticized. At the end, they leave the old organization and they reorganize.

One of the striking points of the novel is hidden at the end of the novel. Suddenly the puntos narrating the Selim and Aygöl's lives become smaller; and the narrator focuses on a woman who is reading a book. The reader of this book is a mother whose son is in prison. Selim and Aygöl's story is the story of the book the woman is reading. While she is reading the book in the train, a couple sits opposite to her and she recognizes the characters of the book, Selim/Seyit and Aygöl/Ayşen. "... The reality was not that she was reading a novel; what she thought she was reading was actually what she had lived!"<sup>152</sup>

Dear people of Istanbul! Seyit and Ayşen are in your city. In your district. In your neighborhood or even in your street. For a long time, they've been engaging in multiplying themselves. With you... They were the lacuna emerged years ago and could never be filled. They've never forgotten their room in you. They've known it! They can explain to those who request how they know it, but why always they haven't done it. Come closer a couple of steps more and your september ciphers...<sup>153</sup>

The book finishes with a feeling of hope and renewal. This switch of the characters indicates that the revolutionaries are everywhere. It is a hope of resistance, solidarity and to decipher the September Code making people silent. Like the other

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.182. "gerçek olan, bir roman okuduğu değil de okuyor sandığı, aslında yaşadığıydı!"

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.183. "“...Ey İstanbullular! Seyit ve Ayşen kentinizde. Semtinizde. Mahalle ve belki sokağınızda. Alt veya üst katınızda. Kaç zamandır, kendilerini yeniden çoğaltmaya koyuldular. Sizinle... yıllar önce açılan ve kapnamayan boşluk onlardı. Onlar, sizdeki yerlerini hiç unutmadılar. Bildiler! Bildiklerini her zaman ve vedev yapamadıklarını ise isteyenlerinize açılabilirler. Birkaç adım daha sokulup eylül şifrelerinize...””

two novels within the series it is a text of desire of hope and a well future which differ these novels written outside of the prison.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Nurdan Gürbilek underlined in *Vitrinde Yaşamak* that the 1980s were both the years of a word boom and word repression and additionally, the 1980s as a decade presented itself as a liberating promise while it was repressing numerous things. The most significant characteristic of this period was its abstraction of the idea that society was formed by political subjects. This kind of an abstraction made society just spectators: they watched the trials of the September 12 convicts and the executions, Kenan Evren's speeches, the movies of sexy figures such as Banu Alkan and Ahu Tuğba, military ceremonies, TRT soap operas and last but not the least Turgut Özal's speeches focused on money. Thus, what was done in this study was not just a literary analysis of the period but to make this literary analysis a part of the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s.

How the September 12 military takeover affected to the literature and language and how it was represented in the literature were the main questions of this study. It is said that there became a great gap between the literature and politics; literature and history; literature and society; and, society and history. On the contrary, in this study, above all, it is suggested that there became a gap between the politics and society. The crowds were dispersed and went back to their homes. The social crisis which was caused by September 12 coup d'état inverted an individual crisis. That is what we see in the literature of the period which focuses on the September 12 military intervention.

Contrary to common assertions, in this study it is believed that there is a September 12 literature, and the problem stems from not the lack of a literature, rather the lack of wanting to see. It is asserted that the representative of the unseen is prison literature. Additionally, the prison literature of the 1980s is the body of September 12 that we can not see or touch, exiled from the sacred country of literature. To become a fellow sufferer and to feel the political atmosphere of the period the prison literature of the 1980s should be remembered and analyzed. The literature written by the convicts gives us the direct representations of the coup, and its political meaning makes us aware of the conditions of prisons and create a resistance space.

In this study I looked for the representations of the political and social atmosphere of September 12 within novels written right after the coup. How September 12 was experienced by the different ideological spaces of the society was depicted in these novels. I asserted that to hold the entire picture of 1980s we must examine the literature in the prisons. It helps us to evaluate literature as the space of conflicts and negotiations of different ideologies. Contrary to common assertions, I claim that there is September 12 literature; furthermore prison literature of 1980s can not be isolated from literary history.

Exclusion of prison literature was parallel to the exclusion of the prisoners from the political and public space also. Literature is like a litmus paper that exclusion of prison literature is a sign of how the hegemonic ideology was successful to make the society forget about the past. This study includes of all kinds of literary experiences into its research field, which distinguishes it from the other literary evaluations. Thus, this study reestablishes literary history by reading the literature of

the unseen, people who were exiled from not only the literary space but also the political and public space, that is to say, the prisoners of the September 12 coup.

Both prison literature and the high literature are analyzed together, since it gives the whole picture of the period, it is to analyze the effects and experience of the September 12 coup. With the help of the works of both the authors of the high literature and the prison literature, it is possible to see the representations of both the dominant mentality of the period and different ideological spaces, their conflicts, overlap, their strict relationship with the junta and interaction with the changing social, economic and political structure of the day.

Throughout this study, it was asserted that the prison literature widened the literary space and included different experiences into its field; thus these experiences found a literary body that made seen the conflicting ideologies, and the period's dominant ideology.

In the first chapter I tried to make a theorization of the relationship among the literature, politics and history with the help of some Marxist thinkers. Additionally I set the socio-cultural background of 1980s to see the position of literature, and then I discussed the litterateur about September 12 literature. I focused on coup d'état literature after the March 12 coup, and the September 12 coup literature is analyzed comparing it with the March 12 literature, since their themes are similar, but the approach to these themes differs. I examined the main themes and tendencies of coup novels. Lastly, I examined that how September 12 was experienced and how it was reflected in literary works and how it affected the literature in the first chapter. Some of the literary works of the period, specifically novels are analyzed within the second and third chapter.

Second chapter was the evaluation of two novels of two writers who had a political position and aimed to see their perception of the political and social atmosphere of the period. In the second chapter, two of the canonized literary works of the period were scrutinized. Latife Tekin's *Night Lessons* and Adalet Ağaoğlu's *No* are significant examples of September 12 literature of this period, since they try to analyze the period, and questions the military take over and its effects on the society and individual, its effects in the streets, in the politics. Ağaoğlu and Tekin shows us the effects of the coup in the outside, and third chapter's imprisoned authors Hüseyin Şimşek and Kadir Konuk depicts the life inside the prison's walls. The coup d'état caused crisis in both the individual and social sense as was expressed in the previous parts. Both literatures present us a possibility to see how the coup was experienced in the streets, in the universities, in the prisons and in the families.

In the third chapter I focused on the New Voices Series of Belge Publications which I think is the best example of prison literature. I deal with the question how these writers experienced the period and what the literature's role was in this experience. To handle the issue in detail, I examined all genres within the series. Throughout this study, I asserted that prison literature and the attempts of the publishing houses such as Belge Publications, widened the borders of literary production.

It explicated that September 12 caused a change in style and language, the transition to the postmodern fiction of Turkish novel has roots all conditions from this period. Literature in 1980s faced with some transformations both in its form and content shaped by the social and political changes. September 12 was a great shock for the society since individual crisis coincided with the social crisis, and what we see in the literary texts focusing on September 12 military take over is this

coincidence and conflict. Literature was reshaped with these crises, its language, structure, and style has changed, fragmented into pieces and than these pieces came together in a different form as adopted the transformations within the period. Each book focuses on an individual crisis which overlaps with the social crisis.

All in all, we can say that September 12 coup literature is growing day by day. There is a great demand to tell and write September 12 military take over. Since the political agenda of Turkey is changing also, these works have an advantage of evaluating the past exempt from the romanticism and rethink the past with the knowledge of the day. It is astonishing that the number of the novels written between 2000 and 2008 is more significant than the number written in the previous decade. I think that the most indicative novel of the 1990s was Kaan Arslanoğlu's *Revolutionaries* (Devrimciler) which is an analysis of the organizations and the despotic structure of the organization in the defeat of the leftist movement. It can be read as a kind of questioning and facing with the role of the despotic structures of the organizations in the defeat of the movement.

It is striking that the most significant examples of September 12 literature are written between 2000 and 2008. Osman Akinhay's *Gün Ağarmasa*, Murat Uyurkulak's *Tol* (Revenge), Ayşegül Devecioğlu's *Kuş Diline Öykünen*, Şöhret Baltaş's *Koşarken Yavaşlar Gibi*, and lastly Mine Söğüt's *Şahbaz'ın Harikulade Yılı: 1979* are the most mentioned ones. The common feature of all these books is their focus on a daily political event to approach September 12 coup d'état. Akinhay takes "the back to the life operation" (Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu, 2000) as its central theme. Since this operation was for breaking the resistance in the prisons, the narrator as an old prisoner of September 12 remembers the resistance and the conditions in the prisons of the 1980s. Uyurkulak's *Tol* (Revenge) is the novel of just

one feeling, and it is revenge. The repression of the leftist Kurdish movement throughout the 1980s is its focus, and the protagonist takes action for revenge. Its language and novel's structure and its approach to the coup distinguishes it from the other novels of the September 12 literature. The remaining ones, Devecioğlu, Batlaş and Söğüt, all question the organization in a sense, and guilty, hope for renewal and sometimes deep hopelessness are their main themes. The common feature these authors is their active engagement to the politics in the 1970s and 1980s.

There is also the prison literature of 1990s different from that of the 1980s having a different agenda. Defeat of the leftist movement and bad conditions of prisons in 80s left its place a heated struggle of Kurdish left and 90s witnessed a kind of civil war between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerillas. It changed the meaning and perception of September 12 so much. Digging the history is in a sense possible with seeing the representative forms of it such as literature.

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