Bodies of Exception: 
Literary Constructions of Illness in Women's Fiction in Turkish, 
1912-1994

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy 
in the Faculty of Humanities

2017

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
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Abstract

The present thesis examines ideological and discursive constructions of physiological, neurological and psychological diseases in women writers’ fiction in Turkish in relation to the nation-building project of Turkey in the twentieth century. While the Turkish nation-building project deployed biopolitics to regulate population, this research has focused on bodies of exception and their potential to undermine the normative discourse on healthy bodies of ideal ‘citizens’. Taking my cue from Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of the figure of homo sacer and the state of exception, I have explored whether sick bodies of women are situated in the state of exception.

For this research, I have selected texts across the twentieth century - from the Balkan Wars in 1912 as a significant cornerstone that signalled the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the end of the Cold War during which the relationship between citizens’ bodies and the state has drastically changed due to three coup d’etats and violence among civil groups of left and right. Since gender occupied a central role in the heteronormative definitions of what an ideal citizen’s body should look like and what was expected of it, I have specifically focused on women writers and their fiction on female characters’ illnesses in a number of genres. The analysis provided focuses on Halide Edib’s national romances Handan, Ateşten Gömlek (The Shirt of Fire), Mev’ut Hüküm (The Promised Verdict) and Tatarcık; Kerime Nadir’s melodramas Hıçkırık (Sobbing) and Posta Güvercini (Carrier Pigeon/Dove); modernist works of the Cold War period Tezer Özlu’s Çocukluğu’nun Soğuk Geceleri (Cold Nights of Childhood) and Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ (African Dance), and post-Cold War short stories by Aslı Erdoğan ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ (In the Void of a Lost Eye) and ‘Tahta Kuşlar’ (Wooden Birds).

In order to present a detailed portrait of the central place of health in the nation-building project of Turkey, my first chapter presents a historical analysis of the official state discourse through speeches and publications by the members of the parliament and prominent health officials of the first half of the century. Here, I argue that the Turkish nation-building project set out to define every individual body as an asset to the well-being of the nation, thereby gave every citizen a biological responsibility with remarks like ‘You need to protect your health in order to be a good citizen’.

My second chapter focuses on Halide Edib Adıvar’s national romances, approaching her oeuvre as a bridge that reflects the change in the normative definitions of ideal woman. It is my argument that the change in Adıvar’s use of illness in her novels is representative of the approach towards illness in the modern Turkish republic with her later works replacing the sickly heroines with healthy ones. Similarly, in my third chapter I focus on Kerime Nadir’s melodramas and approach her novels as texts where the wounded masculinity caused by the lost Ottoman Empire is healed and saved by the sacrifice of the heroines. As the heroines devote their life energies to heal and raise the heroes, they gradually lose their health only to be replaced by their healthy and sturdy daughters or younger companions.

In my final chapter, I focus on modernist works produced during and shortly after the Cold War, and discuss the change in the function of the sick bodies. In these works, writers embrace the images of sick bodies as tools of resistance to authoritarian regimes. It is in this period, the docile bodies of the previous works are charged with resistance and their borders are shattered. With the state applying torture and violence on citizens’ bodies, sick bodies turn into weapons and become revolutionary.
Declaration

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Daniela Caselli and Anastasia Valassopoulos. They have always provided me with advice, helped me develop my critical approach, inspired me and made me enjoy every second of this research. They have welcomed my ideas, even the hopeless ones, and encouraged me as a scholar and researcher. I could not have written this thesis without their guidance and endless support. I am grateful to my supervisory panel, Ben Harker and Mareile Pfannebecker for their invaluable advice and support. With his questions and guidance during my mock viva, John Roache has helped me have an incredibly enjoyable viva. I am grateful for his contribution in my thinking. I am grateful to Howard Booth and Maureen Freely for their priceless recommendations on how to take this project further, and for making my viva one of the most unforgettable and enjoyable experiences of my life.

Without Çimen Günay-Erkol I would not be half as passionate about my work as I am now. She has not only supported both my MA and PhD work, but has also become my mentor and role model over the years. She has patiently read through my chapters, given me invaluable advice and welcome my every idea with great excitement. She has made a scholar out of me, and for that, I am forever grateful. I would also like to thank Burcu Alkan for being a mentor and a great friend. She has never given up guiding me over the years. She supported me in my endeavour to pursue my PhD in Manchester, and never refrained from visiting every time she felt I needed support. I feel very lucky to have her and Cimen Günay-Erkol in my life. I am also grateful to my former colleagues at Özyeğin University: Senem Timuroğlu Bozkurt, Wendy Wiseman, Ali Serdar, Hüseyin Dağ, Güray Erkol, Uğur Ermez Yetkin and İrfan Karakoç for their friendship.

I would like to thank Jale Parla, Murat Belge, Ferda Keskin, Bulent Somay, Nazan Aksoy, Zeynep Altok, Kaan Atalay and Evin Aslan for not only supplying me with a solid background to help me pursue an academic path, but also being my role models on the way. Jale Parla in particular has not only guided me since my undergrad education, but also provided me with every support she could give in the process of my PhD applications. I am very lucky to be her student. I would also like to thank Fatih Altuğ for sharing his work on Sevim Burak with me generously.

I have also been lucky beyond words to teach as part of incredibly supportive teams and to be advised by amazing lecturers at the University of Manchester. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Noelle Gallagher for being a mentor, and for providing me with support and help for my teaching. I am grateful to Howard Booth, Robert Spencer and John Roache for their incredible support, advice and patience on the Writing, Identity and Nation module which has been an absolute joy to teach. Anastasia Valassopoulos has been my guide since the very first day of my teaching adventure at the University of Manchester. I am forever thankful.

A city is not a ‘home’ unless there are loved ones in it. I feel lucky to have incredible friends who have turned Manchester into a home for me: Tristan Burke, Zoe Gosling, Anirudha Dhanawade, Hazel Shaw, Edmund Chapman, William Simms, Ruari Paton,
Lucy Burns, Luke Healey, Joe Morton, Kath Boeckenhof, Yulin Chen and Rosalie Sora. I would especially like to thank Laura Swift and Joel H. Swann for not only their friendship and support, but also being incredible housemates. They have seen me through the last phase of this work; without their motivation this research could not have been completed so swiftly. Anirudha Dhanawade has helped me during my preparations for my viva. His patience seems to have no limits and for that I am deeply grateful. Zoe Gosling, Laura Swift, Lucy Burns, Peter Cherry and Tristan Burke generously proofread my chapters and offered their suggestions. I am thankful for their priceless help. Luke Healey provided me with a platform to share my research with my colleagues. I would like to thank him for his belief in my work. I would also like to thank other friends who have turned my Manchester adventure into a joyful one: Het Philips, Annie Dickinson, Federica Colluzi, Sarah Newport and Jack Sullivan.

I would like to thank my friends in Istanbul whose absence is felt very deeply every day. Sibel Doğru has never given up supporting me and has been incredibly patient with my constant worries and complaints about my research over the years. I feel lucky to have her as my best friend. Nevin Durmaz, Egem Atik, Pelin Ekmekçi Dalgıç and Aleks Banakis have been great friends and shoulders to cry on over the years. I would like to express my deep gratitude to their friendship. I am also grateful to Elif Nayman, Deniz Nayman, İpek Şoran and Peter Cherry, and especially to Müge Özoğlu for their friendship and support. Müge Özoğlu and I have shouldered the whole PhD process together. Her presence in my life, even if it is from Leiden, has certainly changed my experience as a PhD student.

Beverley Parker, Jeremy Parker, Lucinda Lu Parker, Simon Parker and Lindsay Parker have become my family in the UK. I am thankful for their warm welcome, support and love. Guy Parker has aided me in any way he could until the final phase of this work. I would like to thank him for his help.

Finally my deep gratitude goes to my family Hilal Bilgin, Gündüz İmşir, Mehmet Bilgin and Feryal Kaplan İmşir. I am a very lucky daughter surrounded by amazing parents.

This work, like all the others before this one, is for my mother, Hilal Bilgin.
Note on the Translations and the Transcriptions

There are many references to Turkish works in this project and all the translations, except for Asli Erdogan's short story 'Tahta Kuslar', are my own throughout. Turkish transcription is preferred where necessary, and the Bibliography follows an alphabetical order based on Turkish. In the bibliography, the letters c, g, o, s, u are followed by ç, ğ, ö, ş, ü respectively, and the letter i is preceded by ı.
A sick chamber may often furnish the worth of volumes.¹

Introduction

In 1853, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg Sir G. H. Seymour reported that Tsar Nicholas I defined the Ottoman Empire as a ‘man,’ who ‘has fallen into a state of decrepitude’.\(^1\) His words were transformed into the now ubiquitous adage ‘the sick man of Europe’ and thus the Ottoman Empire was characterised as a decrepit, decaying and dilapidated power on the fringes of Europe in Western political caricatures and discourses of the time. Following the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the newly founded Turkish republic defined itself as a young and progressive nation state as opposed to the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire as old, sick and conservative. Adopting modernization as an official strategy, the new Turkey had clear cut definitions on who was an ideal Turkish citizen: according to the official speeches and publications by the leading politicians and the founding Republican People’s Party members, the ideal Turkish citizen was modern, well-educated, healthy and fit. From the speeches of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first and founding president of Turkey, to the publications of the health officials, devoting one’s life to taking the country up to the level of Western European countries was expected of every citizen.\(^2\) Health and sports played important roles in this mission: remaining healthy and taking care of one’s body were defined as the primary duties of every citizen.\(^3\) Women especially had to make sure that they were healthy, since they were expected to give birth to and raise healthy young generations. In a period when every individual life was approached as potentially allegorical, this project asks: what about the unhealthy individual body? Is it possible to look at Turkish modernity by looking at what it excludes?

This thesis examines bodies of exception: illness and its literary constructions in women writers’ prose fiction in Turkish language literature from what is considered to be the ‘fatal amputation of the Ottoman Empire’ that refers to a period beginning with the Balkan Wars in 1912, to the end of the Cold War in 1991. It concerns itself with women writers who used the trope of illness in their fictions, and charts how the literary representation of the body of the sick woman has varied and changed in a number of forms from national romances to melodramas and modernist works. Does illness have the potential to expose the cracks in the system of modern Turkish sovereign power? Considering that the Turkish state was controlling its citizens’ bodies with mottos like

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\(^{3}\) Ayça Alemdaroğlu, ‘Eugenics, Modernity and Nationalism’ in *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (NY: Routledge, 2006), pp.61-76.
‘You need to protect your health to be a good citizen’, does being sick mean failing as a citizen? Or on the contrary, does the sick chamber offer a new kind of freedom from the panopticon? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, how do these potentialities manifest themselves in prose fiction written by women writers? With these questions in mind, this thesis sets out to read literary constructions of illness and sick bodies from the early twentieth-century when the nation-building project set out to define every individual body as an asset to the well-being of the nation to the end of the Cold War when the relationship between individuals’ bodies and the state were redefined irredeemably due to three coups d’états and growing violence applied by the state, police and the army as well as by armed civil groups. Works this thesis focuses upon include Halide Edib’s national romances such as Handan (1912), Ateşten Gömlek (translated and published in English as The Shirt of Fire and The Daughter of Smyrna: A Story of the Rise of Modern Turkey, on the Ashes of the Ottoman Empire--the Turk’s Revolt Against Western Domination, His Thrilling Adventures, Sufferings and Sacrifices in the Cause of National Honour and Independence, 1923), Mev’ut Hüküm (The Promised Verdict, 1917) and Tatark ı (1939); Kerime Nadir’s melodramas such as Hiçkırık (Sobbing, 1938) and Posta Güvercini (Carrier Pigeon/Dove, 1950); modernist works of the Cold War period such as Tezer Özlü’s Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri (Cold Nights of Childhood, 1980) and Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ (African Dance, 1982), and post-Cold War short stories by Aslı Erdoğan such as ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ (In the Void of a Lost Eye, 1996) and ‘Tahta Kuşlar’ (Translated as Wooden Birds, 1997).

Because medicine functions as one of the most powerful agents of Turkish modernization since the Tanzimat (reorganization) edict in 1839, that is the Ottoman Empire’s first official attempt at Westernization, social and political transformations lie at the heart of this project. In the course of reforming the empire and later engineering the idea of nation, medical and materialist discourses were the main agents of power in defining the new and modernized Ottomans and members of the Turkish nation respectively. Similarly, the novel as a literary form was introduced, produced and developed in the Ottoman Empire in the same period, serving the members of intelligentsia as a medium to explore and spread Western European notions like liberty, nation and democracy on the one hand, as a didactic device to guide the masses about the dangers as well as ‘correct’ ways of Westernization on the other. In this respect, politics in the Turkish novel has never been a ‘pistol shot in the middle of a concert’, as put by Sibel Irzık, since the Turkish novel has ‘always exhibited a preoccupation with social and
historical themes, ranging from the first novels’ warnings against excessive Westernization to the romantic depiction of the spirit of the Anatolian people in the so-called village novels of the early years of the republic, or the criticism of class oppression and state corruption in the social realist novels of the 1950s. As a result, this project takes its cue from Foucauldian discourse analysis and draws upon cultural materialism as its methodology by looking at women writers’ constructions of illness in relation to cultural materialist understanding of culture. In *The Long Revolution* (1961), Raymond Williams defines the term as follows:

...there is the ‘social’ definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. Such analysis will include the historical criticism already referred to, in which intellectual and imaginative works are analyzed in relation to particular traditions in societies, but will also include analysis of elements in the way of life that to followers of the other definitions are not ‘culture’ at all: the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate.

Following Williams’ notion of culture, this project approaches works of literature as ‘part of a network and history of practices’. By looking at a number of novels and short stories in which narratives of illness are explored as well as developed, it proceeds from the idea that, as David Simpson argues, ‘Literature both reproduces and reformulates ideology, and in its reformulations it becomes, implicitly, a vanguard element’. In the novels discussed throughout this research, the dominant ideology that prompts the image of the healthy body of ideal citizen often clashes with the persistent tangibility of the material body. This research, therefore, both scrutinizes the ways in which biological and neurological diseases are transformed into constructed discourses of illness as well as the resistance of the corporeal to various ideological discourses. While Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler’s formulations of biopolitics and the construction of heteronormativity provide this project with methods of discourse analysis, Giles Deleuze and Maurice

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Merleau-Ponty’s approach offers useful ways of scrutinizing the resistance of the corporeal body.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault famously discusses the modern juridical power that exercises itself not through death but by investing in life and argues that as ‘administration of bodies’ became the main task of politics; schools, health policies as well as military barracks became the institutions of controlling life; discipline over the bodies became the main tool of hegemony. Therefore, looking at the history of modernity means looking at its method of investing, calculating, managing and regulating human lives. He writes:

Broadly speaking, at the juncture of the ‘body’ and the ‘population,’ sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death. […] the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used. Through the themes of health, progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke of sexuality and to sexuality; the latter was not a mark or a symbol, it was an object and a target.

Informed by this Foucauldian biopolitical theory, this project looks at the so-called modernization and Westernization project of Turkey from a bodily perspective and reads it as a project of administrating sexuality, health and sickness. In his seminal work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben finds the foundations of such mechanisms of modern power in the mergence of *zoê*, ‘which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods)’ and *bios*, ‘which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group’ of Greek philosophy in Latin juridical power. He follows on by arguing that what was differentiated by ancient Greek philosophy was then combined at the threshold of the modern era. Here, Agamben disagrees with the Foucauldian argument on the inclusion of *zoê* as the fundamental characteristic of modern politics and argues instead that the decisive event of modern politics is at the same time its fundamental contradiction: the inclusion of what is excluded in the modern juridical power. It is in his writing that we find the modern dilemma of ‘the bios of *zoê*’ that relies strictly on the ban on bare life. He writes, ‘There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare

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9 Ibid.
life and at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion'.

We are then discussing bodies being carried to the centre of politics to be controlled and whose basic actions such as eating, drinking, mating, defecating and so on, to be banned, limited, managed and organized. This, too, however, brings forth another contradiction. From the very first moment, ‘a simple living body became what is at stake in a society’s political strategies’, the emphasis on such a living body has marked the flesh with political weight. In Eric Santner’s words, ‘The paradox at work here is, in short, that the defence mechanisms cultures use to protect against a primordial exposure - to “cover” our nudity – serve in the end to redouble this exposure and thereby to “fatten” the flesh of creaturely life’. Looking at the seventeenth and eighteenth century in France, Sara Melzer and Kathryn Norberg connect the idea of the fattened body to the transformation from monarchy to nationhood and argue that as power changed hands the weight on the flesh of the monarch was carried to the bodies of the people. They write, ‘Suddenly every body bore political weight’.

In Ernst Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* we find the fundamental discussion on the existence of two bodies, incorporate and body politics in one. Differentiating the king’s carnal body that eats, sleeps and eventually dies, from the undying, mystic body of the king that is the embodiment of the soul, migrating from one carnal king to another as echoed by the cries ‘The King is dead! Long live the king!’, he traces the ‘political theology’ of the Christian tradition back to the middle ages and notes that, ‘this ‘incarnation’ of the body politic in a king of flesh not only does away with the human imperfections of the body natural, but conveys ‘immortality’ to the individual king as King, that is, with regard to his superbody’. Following Kantorowicz’s argument, Eric Santner in his *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* focuses on the fattening of the material bodies with such political weight by tracing the transformation of the symbolic weight of the king’s body to the People. Since his argument functions as one of the key components of the main thesis of this work, I will reproduce here a lengthy quote from his work:

A central problem for secular modernity is how to account for the flesh once it no longer

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12 Agamben, p.8.
13 Santner, p.6.
functions as that which, so to speak, ‘fattens’ the one who occupies the place of power and
authority, elevating the body that thereby comes to figure as its naturally because
supernaturally appointed caretaker, the one charged with guaranteeing the health of this
element for all the others (who thereby become his subjects). As I have been arguing, the
discourses and practices that we now group under the heading of ‘biopolitics’ come to be
charged with these duties, with the care taking of the sublime (but also potentially abject)
flesh of the new bearer of the principle of sovereignty, the People. The dimension of the
flesh comes, in a word, to be assimilated to the plane of the health, fitness, and wellness of
bodies and populations that must, in turn, be obsessively measured and tested. But if my
hunch is right, that would mean that before biopolitics emerged as such, it was, in some
sense, already on the scene as the political theology of kingship.¹⁶

The weight of the flesh of the members of the nation can be observed in the
transformation of democratic nationhood of Turkey from the monarchy of the Ottoman
Empire. The exclusion of the sick bodies from the definition of what constitutes the ideal
citizenship as healthy and sturdy occupies the central focus of this project. In Giorgio
Agamben’s work, we find the route that transforms the corporeal body, in his words
‘natural body’, into social or politicized body through the exclusion of bare life. Such
‘inclusive exclusion’ occupies the very centre of the Law. He writes, ‘Law is made of
nothing but what it manages to capture inside itself through the inclusive exclusion of the
exception: it nourishes itself on this exception and is a dead letter without it’.¹⁷ If bare life
is included in the Law through its exclusion, it then proves to be impossible to completely
exclude. The fattening of the People’s bodies, as Santner argues, does not manage to ‘get
rid of the problem of the carnal or corporeal dimension of representation’.¹⁸ Failing to
fulfil the predicaments of a docile body which, in Foucault’s words, ‘is manipulated,
shaped, trained’ and ‘which obeys, responds, becomes skilful, and increases its forces’,¹⁹
the sick body functions as the persistent reminder of the ban.

The banning of the corporeal does not only occur at the level of state politics. In the
process of the emergence of the self, similar exclusion/inclusion strategies are applied. In
fact such inclusion through exclusion also lies at the heart of psychoanalytical theory. In
her Strangers to Ourselves, Julia Kristeva connects Freud’s notion of the uncanny with the
birth of the nation:

One cannot hope to understand Freud’s contribution, in the specific field of psychiatry,
outside of its humanistic and Romantic filiation. With the Freudian notion of the
unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and

¹⁶ Eric L. Santner, The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty (Chicago:
¹⁷ Agamben, p.27.
¹⁸ Santner, p.5.
integrates within the assumed unity of human beings and otherness that is both biological and symbolic and becomes an integral part of the same. Henceforth the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation. The foreigner is neither glorified as a secret Volksgeist nor banished as disruptive of rationalist urbanity. Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided.\textsuperscript{20}

This, then, means that every modern subject carries their ‘other’ within. The mutual characteristic between the sovereign power of the state and the superego of the self reveals itself in Agamben’s argument about language: ‘Language is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language and that language is always beyond itself’.\textsuperscript{21} Language, accordingly, works in two parallels. It is the ultimate device of the sovereign power which cannot form and articulate itself without the language that is the Law. It also exists for itself, within itself; there is nothing beyond it, nothing makes sense beyond it, for ‘sense’ is only made within the limits of language. ‘It expresses the bond of inclusive exclusion to which a thing is subject because of the fact of being in language, of being named’, and for this very reason, ‘To speak is’, he suggests, ‘always to speak the law’.\textsuperscript{22} It exists by leaving out.

At the end of his first volume on \textit{homo sacer}, Agamben summarises his thesis in three arguments. I will focus on the first two as they best help to move my argument forward. His first thesis goes as follows:

I. The original political relation is the ban (the state of exception as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion).\textsuperscript{23}

I would like to place his argument on state power into the private sphere of individuation and suggest that the ban is a form of abjection. In her \textit{Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection}, Julia Kristeva defines the abject (excrement, filth, bodily fluids and corpse) as something that is neither object nor subject, including but also excluding both.

The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. [...] The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where

\textsuperscript{21} Agamben, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Agamben, p.181.
The in-between position of the abject disturbs the borders of subjectivity and culture by threatening the integrity of the subjection that is necessary for the formation of identity. The abject cannot be defined in the limits of the language. It has been ostracized from language, culture and religion to avoid shattering. For Kristeva, subjectivity has been formed through leaning on the distinctions between ‘I’ and ‘the other’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, ‘excessive outside’ and ‘bodily interior’. Belonging to both, the abject threatens to destroy such dualities of the speaking subject as she argues, ‘It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death’. In other words, the abject bears the risk of taking the speaking subject who has formed itself through the Law, back to the realm of the presymbolic, prelinguistic oneness with the mother. Therefore, the abject threatens most the ones with the most definite borders and limits, since ‘filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies to what relates to a boundary and, more particularly, its other side, a margin’. To protect itself from abjection, ‘An unshakable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside’.

When facing the abject, the speaking subject often physically reacts with nausea, anger, or laughter. For Kristeva, such are the ways of suppressing the horrible fear of losing subjectivity or in other words, the language. Examples of abject are carcasses, excrement, even a piece of hair on a plate. However, what is abject does not necessarily have a physical definition or existence. In Kristeva’s theory, crime is also a type of abject, since it reminds us of the fragility of the law, of the lines that the subject has drawn to preserve its wholeness. ‘It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection’ she notes ‘but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules’.

Like the subject, the state power suffers from the same threat against its borders and the ban is the defence mechanism against the destruction of the system and borders. Agamben’s second thesis goes as follows:

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26 Ibid, p.69.
27 Ibid, p.16.
28 Ibid, pp.2-3.
29 Ibid, p.84.
The fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, zoê and bios. […] The second thesis implies that Western politics is a biopolitics from the very beginning, and that every attempt to found political liberties in the rights of the citizen is, therefore, in vain.\textsuperscript{30}

In other words, bare life or pure life (or not yet politicised life) lies at the centre of the modern Western politics of the twentieth-century. Agamben’s discussion on coma and patients with brain death also reveals the \textit{homo sacer} characteristic of unhealthiness.

The hospital room in which the neomort, the overcomatose person, and the faux vivant waver between life and death delimits a space of exception in which a purely bare life, entirely controlled by man and his technology, appears for the first time. And since it is precisely a question nor of a natural life but of an extreme embodiment of \textit{homo sacer} (the comatose person has been defined as an intermediary being between man and an animal), what is at stake is, once again, the definition of a life that may be killed without the commission of homicide (and that is, like \textit{homo sacer}, ‘unsacrificeable’, in the sense that it obviously could not be put to death following a death sentence).\textsuperscript{31}

With its capacity to be unwell, the material body functions as the reminder of the ban. The flesh haunts the \textit{soul} of the People. Consequently, the threat that is posited by the haunting flesh causes for the discourse around illness to both function as the reflection of cracks in the modern condition as well as bearing the potential to resist it. On the one hand, this project moves from the claim that a thorough understanding of Turkish modernisation requires a close investigation on the political weight on bodies. If, on the other hand, modernity ensures its power through disciplining and banning the bare life, this project also claims that the sick body has the potential to function as the reminder of the ban.

Accordingly, a diachronic look at the case of Turkish modernization and the Westernization project between the \textit{Tanzimat} period of the Ottoman Empire to the end of the Cold War Turkey in the twentieth-century, offers an example of the close relationship between modernity, nationhood and the administration of bodies. Although the historical scope of this research primarily focuses on the modern Turkish Republic, generating a thorough understanding of the discourse around health and illness in modern Turkey requires an introduction and discussion on the last century of the Ottoman Empire. In particular, it is necessary to outline ruptures relating to discourses on health during the \textit{Tanzimat} period between 1839 and 1876, since preventive medicine and centralizing the health service became issues to consider for the Ottoman Empire just before it went

\textsuperscript{30} Agamben, p.181.
\textsuperscript{31} Agamben, pp.164-165.
through a period of vast modernisation through *Tanzimat* reforms. The Ottoman retreat in military terms led Sultan Selim III to pay particular attention to the health and fitness of the Ottoman soldiers and as a result to found the first state hospital in 1806.\(^\text{32}\) The worries over health of the population continued with the first utilisation of quarantines to be held under the rule of Sultan Mahmud II in the first quarter of the nineteenth-century.\(^\text{33}\) Following the establishment of *Meclis-i Tâhâffûz-ı Ûlà* (The High Council of Quarantine) in 1838, this institution would later be turned into *Meclis-i Ümûr-ı Sîhhiye* (The Council of Health Issues).\(^\text{34}\) In this sense, it was not only the health but also the birth and death of subjects in the empire had become an issue that the Ottoman administration began to concern itself with. Between 1829 and 1836, the population census and the registration of births and deaths were regulated.\(^\text{35}\) From 1827 onwards, the Ottoman Empire systematized its control over abortions with decrees that banned the act or penalized those who assisted abortion.\(^\text{36}\) After the death of Sultan Mahmud II, his son, Abdülmecid started the period of modernisation and reform, namely the *Tanzimat*, in 1839, which was the Ottoman Empire’s arguably the first real attempt at modernisation and Westernization.\(^\text{37}\) In 1840, *Meclis-i Tibbiye* (Medical Council) was founded to regulate pharmaceutical products.\(^\text{38}\) This was followed by the establishment of vaccination centres in Istanbul with a decree announced in 1846.\(^\text{39}\) The empire’s concern over the population led various other decrees and regulations to be put into action. Among those, there was *Memleket Etıbbası ve Eczâclârî Hakkında Nizamnâme* (Regulation Concerning Physicians and Pharmacists of the Country) on 16 April 1888 which declared that physicians would be subjected to

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\(^{32}\) Tuba Demirci, ‘Body, Disease and Late Ottoman Literature: Debates on Ottoman Muslim Family in the Tanzimat Period (1839-1908)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Bilkent University, 2008), p.26. As a comparison, Demirci notes, ‘Traditionally, Ottomans left the issue of public health to the hospitals (dârûşşifâ) and madhouses (bîmârhâne) which were attached and financed by pious foundations and religious colleges (medrese). This means that hospitals were autonomous of state authority; for example central administration did not consider intervening or managing the issues of public health as its duty in the preceding and formative periods of Ottoman imperial progress.’ According to Demirci the reason for the establishment of a medical institution in control of the state can be read in connection to the sultan’s worry over ‘the Ottoman military failures vis-à-vis Austrian and Russian assaults [that] had triggered the Ottoman ruling elite to form administrative and social reforms with a special focus on demography’. Demirci, pp.26-27.


\(^{34}\) Demirci, p.28.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, p.29.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, p.36.


\(^{38}\) Demirci, p.119.

\(^{39}\) Ibid, p.122.
regular inspections.\textsuperscript{40} By the turn of the century, worries over syphilis had led to the publication of books both in translation and originally written in Ottoman Turkish to be distributed to warn the public about the dangers of the disease with writers such as Ahmed Midhat, İbnu’l Hakki Mehmed Tahir or Melikzade Fuad strongly arguing that full health checks should now be preconditions of marriages.\textsuperscript{41}

In other words, worries over diseases developed alongside concerns regarding the structure and system of the Ottoman Empire. The opinions on the need for the spread of a scientific and positivist world-view to create a new Ottoman society also began to gain popularity in the second half of the nineteenth-century among many Ottoman intellectuals especially in relation to the Tanzimat reforms. German materialist Ludwig Buchner, French physiologist Claude Bernard and later, English naturalist and geologist Charles Darwin among many others, became influential names and were often cited to explain society in light of science and positivism. Medicine functioned as one of the key areas where these new epistemological notions were introduced and applied. However, transforming Western concepts into Ottoman Turkish with the Arabic alphabet often proved to be too hard a task, since the latter did not possess terminology that could introduce many of concepts of positivist epistemology. As a result, in military and medical schools the official language was French. Pupils had to be guided in French and the official textbooks were in French.\textsuperscript{42}

An infatuation with materialism and positivism led many Ottoman students, thinkers and writers to act as social engineers. So much so that one of the prominent and controversial names of Ottoman materialism, Dr Abdullah Cevdet, was indeed one of the five founder members of the nucleus of the Society of Union and Progress, ‘a secret organization that aimed to overthrow the regime’\textsuperscript{43} at the Royal Medical Academy in 1889. It is therefore not a coincidence that the seeds of the Society of Union and Progress were first planted in the medical school. The first members were the students of Mehmed Şakir Paşa, a professor at the Royal Medical Academy and a former student of the physiologist, and a great inspiration behind Emile Zola’s naturalism, Claude Bernard. Hence, determinism, social Darwinism and heredity were pivotal to the political climate of the 19th and early twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire in line with its European

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, pp.128-129.  
\textsuperscript{41} Demirci, pp.227-228.  
contemporaries such as France or the United Kingdom. It is in this period, Tuba Demirci notes, with the introduction of population policies and the institutionalization of public health, that the ‘masses/ inhabitants/subjects, quite often denoted by the famous Ottoman word *ahali*’ were turned into ‘population with its all technical, social and political connotation’.

After the foundation of the Turkish republic, investment in the bodies of the population continued to be directly influenced by Western European examples, and eugenics began to play an important, if ominous, role in definitions of who an ideal Turkish citizen was. The European discourse on hereditary qualities was studied closely to support the official ideology, legitimising a strict control on the bodies of the citizens.

When it came to racial definitions, controlling population and constructing nation, Francis Galton was one of the names often referenced in the publications of the period. He was followed by Gregor Mendel and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Perihan Çambel, Şevket Aziz Kansu, Sadi Irmak were among the ones who referenced these theorists in their works while explaining the roots of the Turkish people and planning the future of the nation.

When Europe defined non-European people as inferior, the new Turkish government focused on proving the ‘Turkish people’s innate capacity to be modern’. This was to be proven historically and medically. The newly founded history council began to lead research into the history of Turks before the Ottoman Empire existed. They ‘discovered’ that Turks were already modern and civilized, although these qualities were overshadowed by the wrong-doings of the Ottoman Sultans. The claims of the research council were supported by biometrics and anthropometrics to prove that the Turkish people were racially connected to Europeans. The culturally defined term ‘Turkish’ became a racial notion in the 1930s, set in opposition to the old, diseased and weak Ottoman Empire: the Turkish citizens of the new country were ‘naturally’ healthy, strong, modern and fit.

Novels lie at the centre of the main concerns of this thesis due to the central position they played at the outset of Turkish modernization since the *Tanzimat* period and due to their function as an artistic medium in which illness as a discourse was explored.

The birth of the novel in Turkey was closely connected to the modernization project, since

44 Demirci, p.24.
the first examples came about as a reaction to the transformation. Emerging with didactic purposes, the first novels were written by members of the intelligentsia (working in the Translation Bureau) who were educated in Europe, ‘well exposed to French literature’ and who were critical of the absence of authority in the decline of the Ottoman Empire. In 1831 the first Turkish newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekayi* (The Chronicler of Events) was established, followed by *Ceride-i Havadis* (News Gazette), founded by an English diplomat and journalist William Churchill in 1840. In 1862, *Tasvir-i Efkar* (Description of Ideas) was founded by İbrahim Şinasi who was ‘a French-educated Ottoman civil servant, poet, and a dramatist who experienced the revolution of 1848 in Paris’. İbrahim Şinasi was also the very same person who published the first literary translation from French. The volume included works by Racine, Lamartine and La Fontaine. A prominent sociologist and writer of the late Ottoman-early republican period Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) describes this new world view and Şinasi’s role in it as follows:

The Turkish Renaissance begins with the Tanzimat. I use this term to denote the movement of Westernization which had started with the Tulip Period and continued with interruptions. The Turks found the secular civilization which they wanted to introduce over against the civilization of religiosity, not in a dead past but in a living present, that is in the West. In literature this movement, which started with Shinasi, began to show to the Turkish people a new horizon of civilization, a new *Weltanschauung*, totally different from the spirit of religiosity which had then become distorted and totally lifeless.

Accordingly, the rising interest in Western literature was directly related to the abandonment of the spiritualistic, supernatural works of Persian literature and in line with the growing adoption of Western European positivist tradition. Many of the early authors of novels found Eastern stories such as *Leyla ile Mecnun* (Layla and Majnun by Persian writer Nizami Ganjavi) or *Ferhad ile Şirin* (Farhad and Shirin, by Ganjavi) too based in fantasy to be enjoyed. One of the most famous Young Ottomans, Namık Kemal, suggested that no one could believe in the likelihood of these stories, whereas the novels of Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas told stories of possible incidents. As Azade Seyhan notes in her *Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context*, ‘In particular, French literature replaced the Persian

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48 Evin, p.10.
50 Ibid, 29.
classics as a model of enlightened insight into human life’.\(^\text{53}\)

Ironically, the first writers to try the new form were not extreme supporters of Westernization, but rather they were Young Ottomans, who were sceptical about the changes. Jale Parla in her *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (Fathers and Sons: The Epistemological Foundations of the Tanzimat Novel), notes that the first novelists of Turkish literature (most of whom were the members of the Young Ottomans), assigned themselves the duty of protecting people from extreme Westernization, positioning themselves as the sons who took the role of the father in the absence of actual patriarchal power, the Ottoman leadership.\(^\text{54}\) In her *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, Karen Wells discusses the role of youth in social mobilization and suggests that they often act as ‘moral guardians of the community’:

> It is not that they reject the normative values of their communities but that they feel that the older generation have forgotten or abandoned an ethical life. In these contexts, youth explicitly frame their role as that of moral guardians of the community, inverting the classical moral context governing parent-child or adult-youth interactions.\(^\text{55}\)

In accordance with Wells’ suggestion, Parla recalls the Quixotic syndrome of preferring a Golden Age while rejecting the current Iron Age and suggests that the Young Ottomans positioned themselves with a similar duty as ‘the guardian[s] of the old values, judge[s] of new values’.\(^\text{56}\) The Young Ottomans’ use of the novels came from a scepticism that argued that the Tanzimat period was insufficient and superficial. They believed that the true reform was going to come from the Western heritage of science and, therefore, positivism and materialism were their main principles. They believed that the combination of Western scientific ideology and Islamic ideology was what was going to save the empire from falling apart. Finding their ideals in Western European enlightenment, they aimed to educate common society. Novels and newspapers were the devices to do that, serving as open universities with articles on science, literature, history, geography.\(^\text{57}\)

Accordingly, the first novels of the period were not only expected to present morals in the stories, but also to be didactic and to give information on useful issues.\(^\text{58}\) As long as the text did not deliver any incorrect messages and served a didactic purpose, new styles

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\(^{53}\) Seyhan, p.29.

\(^{54}\) Parla, pp.13-15.


\(^{56}\) Parla, pp.57 – 59.


\(^{58}\) Ibid, 16.
were accepted. This not only reveals what these first novelists expected from prose fiction, but also why themes related to fantasy were excluded from the early Turkish novels. Yet, disliking fantasy elements in stories did not stop them from following the rules of what Parla calls a ‘higher text’, which was Islam. Since their writing was born from their concerns over the lack of authority, they did not feel the need to hide the authoritarian voice in their texts. The author was quite strictly interfering with the story. He saw it all, knew what was happening in the minds of the characters and sometimes stopped to educate the readers. These first novels were highly allegorical for, as Jale Parla suggests, the main principle behind the texts was Islamic ‘all-mighty’ philosophy. The good and the bad were quite clearly differentiated from each other. The message was more important than the plot or the characters for every character represented East and West, good and evil while plots were the space for the clash. Thus, from the beginning, the novel in Turkey evolved hand in hand with the modernization project as a space of negotiation.

Raymond Williams contends that being a space of negotiation is one of the core characteristics of the novel as a genre as it, in Claire Colebrook’s words, ‘represent[s] the contradictory emergence of dominant, residual and emergent cultural forces’. In accordance with Williams’ suggestion, fictional narratives of illnesses become artistic spaces where discourses on bodies are negotiated. Processes of negotiation and narrativization function as bridges that turn diseases into illnesses. Elaine Scarry points to the word ‘poena’, the mutual root for pain and punishment, and suggest that subjects always tend to define the pain with an imaginary weapon: ‘It feels as though a hammer is coming down on my spine’. Thus, even though language is not enough to express pain, ‘as if/though’ is the next best thing to share the experience of it. In other words, from the moment of describing the pain with ‘as if’, the speaking voice enters the world of metaphors. Thus Scarry argues, ‘Physical pain has no voice, but when it at last finds a voice, it begins to tell a story’. For this reason, this project focuses specifically on illnesses rather than diseases, since while the former concerns with narratives, the latter

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60 Jale Parla, p.42.
61 Ibid, p.49.
63 See Ahmet Mithat, Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi, 1875; Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, Araba Sevdası, 1889; Şemsettin Sami, Taasuk-i Talat ve Fitnat, 1875; Namık Kemal, İntihab, 1876.
64 Jale Parla, pp. 60-61.
65 Colebrook, p.144.
67 Ibid, p.3.
concerns with medicine. Where medical discourses and humanities intersect is, in other words, what makes a disease an illness. As Clark Lawlor points out in his *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease*, ‘narrative is a tool to demonstrate how mythologies of illness arise partly because humans must explain disease through patterns of language’ and these narratives ‘are able to transcend or transform the physical world: even that of our own bodies’. Therefore, medicine is also concerned with the material sense of ‘cure’, however, the very idea of ‘cure’ is at stake in the ‘illness’. If we are to discuss illnesses as forms of narrative made up of representations and metaphors, then inevitably we should discuss the ideology behind such narratives, since ideology as defined by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt is ‘a complex and contradictory system of representations (discourse, images, myths) through which we experience ourselves in relation to each other and to the social structures in which we live’. Through the literary representations of illnesses, what Foucault defines as ‘regulatory ideals’, the subject is created, or regulated, in the image of ideology.

In his chapter entitled ‘Conjectures on World Literature’, Franco Moretti looks at the rise of the novel in ‘cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe)’, and argues that ‘the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials’. Following Fredric Jameson’s argument on Masao Miyoshi’s *Accomplices of Silence*, which, according to Jameson, ‘marks the gap between the raw material of Japanese social experience and [the] abstract formal patterns of Western novel construction that cannot always be welded together seamlessly’, Moretti formulates what he calls a ‘law of literary formulation’ which he sees as ‘When a culture starts moving towards the modern novel, it’s always as a compromise between foreign form and local materials’. Among the scholars whose research focus on the emergence of novel in various national literatures, Moretti also cites Jale Parla who likens the renovations in the Tanzimat period to a ‘mould fit’ and notes ‘the mould, however, was supposed to hold two different epistemologies that rested on irreconcilable axioms’, and as a result, ‘It was inevitable that this mould would crack and...

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72 Moretti, p.52.
literature, in one way or another, reflects the cracks’.73

Looking at the example of Japan, Fredric Jameson cites Kojin Karatani’s ‘Sickness as Meaning’ in the foreword to Origins of Modern Japanese Literature and defines medicine as an ‘agent of modernization’, one whose power is beyond any other as he argues, ‘Medicine is all of Western science, as well as being a science: it is ‘thoroughly political, constituting one form of centralized power’.74 Indeed in this work, Karatani points to two inevitable relationships that are tied to sickness. Disagreeing with Susan Sontag’s argument in the Illness as Metaphor that suggests, ‘Illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness – and the healthiest way of being ill – is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking’,75 Karatani proposes, instead, that it is impossible to strip illness from meaning, since, regardless of the individuals’ bodily experiences of it, illness exists in society ‘as the effect of a certain typological schema, a semiological system’.76 Looking at it as an engineered narrative, Karatani goes on to look at the effects of Dutch medicine (‘the only form of Western learning that was sanctioned by the Edo government’) in Japan and notes, ‘More than in any other area, it has been in modern medicine that ‘knowledge’ has effectively constituted power’ and that ‘The structure of medical science promoted an opposition between illness and health’.77 Locating a direct relationality between the decline of nativist romanticism with the embracement of medical theory and literary naturalism in Japanese literature, Karatani points to the literary tuberculosis and cancer as keys that reveal a ‘disturbance within a complex net of interrelationships’.78

Following Karatani’s argument, this study attempts to read illness in the novels written in the Turkish language to reveal what Karatani describes as ‘disturbance within a complex net of interrelationships’ and primarily focuses on literary illnesses as representations of what is left out during the modernization process. Included now in the modern mechanisms of modern power through exclusion, characters who are ill have the potential to reveal what has been excluded from the definition of the ideal ‘new’ Turkish citizen in the process of modernization. If we also take gender aspect into account, these narratives lie in a tradition that has the potential to undermine the master narrative.

Gender plays a crucial role in the history of modernization in Turkey. As Deniz

73 Jale Parla, cited by Moretti, p.54.
74 Jameson, p.xv.
77 Ibid, p.111.
78 Ibid, p.112.
Kandiyoti writes in ‘Women as Metaphor: The Turkish Novel from the Tanzimat to the Republic’, ‘the key moments of the transformation of discourse on women in Turkey can be seen to coincide with critical junctures in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic’. Expectations when creating definitions of the ‘new Turkish citizen’ rely deeply on normative structures of gender that ignoring this aspect whilst looking at narratives of illness would be impossible. Women’s bodies especially were treasured and celebrated, as the existence of healthy new generations was only possible if the mothers were healthy, modern and educated. As a result, the history of women’s fight to be free dissolved into the history of the nation: women’s freedom was necessary to prove to the world that this new Turkey was a civilized one. As soon as the newly founded state took control of the feminist movement, women’s fights that dated back to the nineteenth century were taken over by the state. The new mission of the Republic was to help in the raising of young girls appropriately and to educate village women through Kemalist ideology; in other words, to support women who could be led.

Figure 1
Zeki Faik İzler, ‘İnkılap Yolunda’, 1933, oil on canvas. Public domain.

Nezihe Muhiddin, the founder of the first women’s political party, was one of the

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80 Ayşe Durakbaşa, ‘Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Kadın ve Erkek Kimliklerinin Oluşumu: Kemalist Kadın Kimliği ve Münevver Erkekler’ (The Invention of Modern Men and Women’s Identities in the Republican Period: Identity of Kemalist Woman and ‘Intellectual Men’), in 75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler (Women and Men in 75 Years), pp.52-64.
excluded figures of this period. In 1923 her political party was accused of separatism and dismantled, while its members were banned from politics.\textsuperscript{81} Even though Muhiddin and others fought for women’s suffragette rights for decades, these rights were given to women after Muhiddin’s party was dismantled. As Yaprak Zihnioglu suggests in her work on Nezihe Muhiddin, women’s liberation was portrayed not as something that was taken by women, but as something given to them by early republican men.\textsuperscript{82} Women were there as signs of civilization and as guardians of the new generations.

Zeki Faik İzler’s portrait, ‘İnkılap Yolunda’ (On the Way to Revolution, 1933) summarizes the role of women in Turkish modernization perhaps better than any other source. In this recasting of Eugène Delacroix ‘Liberty Leading the People’ (1830), the painter portrays a woman carrying the national flag, surrounded by figures like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on her left, showing her which way to go. Evidently, women were not there to make decisions but rather they were there to be modernized to serve either as mothers or as bodiless creatures whose sexualities would be castrated by their desire to serve the nation with their minds. For instance, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, who was a physician and mayor and a governor of Istanbul from 1949-1957, recommended women marry early and become stay-at-home wives and mothers to remain healthy enough to produce children. He suggested that it was better for women who chose to work to remain single, since they could not be healthy enough to be mothers and therefore there was no point in burdening men’s productivity.\textsuperscript{83} Education and subsequently, serving the nation through professions was, therefore, a gender-free path. The ‘new woman’ was either dedicated to breeding children as ‘the mother of new generations’ or she was deprived of any femininity and seen as a sexless creature. Both versions of this ‘new woman’ were supposed to be sporty and healthy to maintain and uphold their supposedly anointed role to reproduce and nurture.

To scrutinize novels as a medium to develop or subvert the discourse around sick bodies as the exceptions of the modern nation-state, this research looks at various modes of relationships between women’s bodies and the official state ideologies in national romances, melodramas and modernist literature. Halide Edib’s national romances such as Handan, Ateşten Gömlek and Mev’ut Hüküm serve as the bridge to reveal the determinist discourse as it is carried out through modernization and nation-building processes. It is possible to observe the change in the use of illness as a trope by scrutinizing how Halide

\textsuperscript{81} Yaprak Zihnioglu, Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birlği, (Revolution Without Women: Nezihe Muhiddin, Women’s Party, Women’s Union) (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2013).
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, p.17.
Edib leaves behind the trope of the sickly heroine as she replaces it with the healthy and sporty bodies of Tatarcık and Zeyneb of Kalb Ağrısı (Heart Ache, 1924). Such a transformation, however, does not occur suddenly or swiftly, as Halide Edib's Mev 'ut Hüküüm, as a novel that combines two irreconcilable genres, naturalism and tragedy, reveals the tension caused by two world views, materialism and spiritual, as exemplified by these genres respectively. Kerime Nadir’s melodramas that make use of the trope of illness as the melodramatic event of the text, on the other hand, are discussed as mediums that reflect the wounded masculinity of the hero with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire which is cured through the replacement of the sickly heroine with her healthy and young daughter following the Turkish War of Independence. Melodramas, in this respect, are important as they reach a wider audience and transmitted ‘Kemalist’ lifestyles that helped build the ideology of the nation-state. Illness, however, is not always used to point to what is perceived as exceptional by the modern nation. After the 1960s, the emergence of modernism in Turkish language literature is also the point when the material body constitutes the central point in many prose works. In Sevim Burak, Tezer Özülü and Aslı Erdoğan’s works, the bodies of exception are embraced and reclaimed by the protagonists, and the sick bodies are turned into weapons with their potentiality to disturb order, discipline and systems.

Thus this research is specifically concerned with women’s two bodies. On the one hand lies the intangible body of the ‘new woman’ whose definition as healthy, sturdy, fertile and self-sacrificing has been engineered and structured as part of the nation-state ideology; on the other hand, the corporeal body whose existence is reminded over and over again by the potentiality of the body to be unwell. Literary illness functions as the crossing point between what is excluded from the modern nation-state as well as what constitutes a threat to it.

Despite the existence of the trope of illness in Turkish language literature since the Tanzimat period, there has not been much research on the use of the trope. Selçuk Çıkla’s research, Edebiyat ve Hastalık (Literature and Illness, 2016) is the first and most recent book to date, published on the subject in relation to Turkish. In this work Çıkla presents various categorizations of the subject, including types of illnesses such as personal (which he divides into three subgroups as physical, mental and spiritual (moral) illness) and social. There are, however, far more problematic aspects of such categorizations. Among ‘mental illnesses’, Çıkla includes hysteria, madness that causes suicide, narcissism, jealousy, Bovarism and sexual freedom that came into the literature and the social life of the
The Ottomans as a result of Westernization. He also defines *bad morality* as a form of personal illness that damages not only the person who is suffering from it but also the social circle of the suffering person. He defines what he refers to as ‘sinful’ behaviours as well as crime as illnesses and goes onto defining personality traits such as selfishness, laziness, idleness, snobishness, malice, hopelessness, pessimism, pettishness and fondness of sensuality among many others as illnesses.  

The list continues according to what Çıkla considers as ‘abnormal’. Such an attitude in defining various traits as bad, immoral and ‘disease-like’ is not only far away from a scholarly approach as it relies strictly on the author’s personal judgement, but it also bears the deep danger of stigmatizing both the traits as well as the notion of being ill. Such an approach normalizes and regulates certain lifestyles and behaviours while turning others abnormal by suggesting that they are diseases in need of medical treatment. It completely disregards the discursive regulations that such an approach develops and feeds, and it fails to problematize the stigmatizations around illnesses.

His treatment of what he defines as social illnesses is also deeply problematic. He refers to the effect of Western Europe in Ottoman culture as an illness that threatened the lifestyles of the Ottomans. He takes the replacement of divinity with people as the central subjects of literature as a sign of illness, and goes on to argue that the novel as a genre is a product of illness with its focus on ‘problematic, weak, sick people and problematic and sick social relations’. In other words, Çikla’s work uses the word ‘illness’ for what he refers to as problem (personal or social) and ‘abnormality’. In the section where he looks at ‘Sick Places’ he refers to Beyoğlu, as a place of contagion in which ‘microbes’ of European lifestyles threaten lives. He refers to the impact of the ‘West’ as a plague and Beyoğlu as the region from which this disease has spread to the other regions of the city and other cities of the country. The focus throughout the book is more on the personal and social traits that are defined as ‘illness’ in the literary texts that are used as examples by Çikla (and is full-heartedly agreed upon and supported by his own arguments) than on medical conditions and how they are narrated. The work, in other words, is too busy diagnosing ‘bad character traits’ to problematize how medicine is used as a tool to marginalize certain groups and behaviours. In other words, it completely fails at reading these narratives (including his own) as the tool of power.

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85 Ibid, p.18.
87 Ibid, p.47.
While his study scrutinizes the metaphors around illness between the Tanzimat period and the foundation of the republic, it fails to distance itself from the discourse and turns the metaphors used in these works into its own argument. It suffers from, in other words, a similar romanticization and stigmatization. I argue that such an approach not only fails at seeing through the discourse around diseases and how such a discourse has been used, reflected or/and altered in works of literature, it ends up feeding the discourse to a dangerous end. Scrutinizing Çıkla’s research, in other words, can serve as a valuable research on its own to reveal the discourse on health, illness and social degeneration in terms of stigmatization and what constitutes a threat.

Tuğba Demirci’s doctoral dissertation, ‘Body, Disease and Late Ottoman Literature: Debates on Ottoman Muslim Family in the Tanzimat Period’ also looks at the relationship between illness and Turkish language literature. In her work, Demirci argues that the modernization process in the Tanzimat period treated family institutions as a central issue with the model of a ‘well-functioning’ family seen as the primary condition for raising healthy members of Ottoman society. In her words, family was seen as ‘pivotal to social change both as the agent of and subject to modernization’. Demirci looks at the centralized health regulations roughly from the Tanzimat period to the Balkan Wars and how narratives around these issues were also produced and spread vis a vis newspapers, journals and novels. In addition to scrutinizing laws and regulations, she also looks at novels that focus on family issues. Quoting Morroe Berges when he writes, ‘The novelist ... takes the large world, or the many worlds of reality, plays upon them imaginatively, and presents to the reader a smaller, more specialized world’, Demirci takes the first examples of the Turkish prose fiction as imaginative reflections of worries on family life in the period. Demirci reads these early novels as examples of advice genre and notes, ‘The state set the regulations, advice genre enhanced the rationale behind regulations and novels popularised this rationale for the Ottoman Muslim public’. Approaching these texts as historical records, however, she ignores their aesthetic characteristics.

Demirci’s work is a crucial point of departure for my own thesis. Put simply, my thesis builds on her work by focusing on a similar corpus but expanding upon it in historical context and reading my texts through a literary studies lens. As such, my thesis is the first comprehensive literary study to focus on the narratives of illness and health from the foundation of the modern Turkish republic to the turn of the century in pursuit of

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88 Demirci, p.16.
89 Quoted in Demirci, p.82.
creating new men and women of the Turkish nation. It is therefore highly useful to see the
connection between these two works and to note that definitions of the ideal citizen of the
Turkish nation were indeed a continuation of the narratives adopted and developed
previously in the Ottoman Empire. Despite the similar diachronic arguments, this thesis, on
the other hand, does not take history as its focus or treat works of literature as historical
records, but rather approaches these novels as artistic mediums where dominant ideological
discourses on health and illness are problematized and negotiated. It also takes women as
its central subject, since, as Demirci’s work has shown, women’s position in society has
served as the main object of debate since the Tanzimat period. It is, in other words, the
purpose of this project is to explore the ways in which the ideological construction of sick
women as the ‘untouchable’ citizens of modern nations is aesthetically explored and/or
contested.

This thesis, therefore, starts with a historical analysis of the discourse around
bodies, health and medicine in the formative years of the republic. The first chapter
scrutinizes speeches that were given in parliament, publications on health by the ruling
Republican People’s Party (CHP), publications by doctors who took the role of healers of
the nation and who acted as official regulators around sports. Defining the nation as
healthy and sturdy becomes one of the fundamental prerequisites of ensuring an organic
connection between the Turkish Republic and Western Europe, more specifically
Germany, Italy, France and the UK. While the discourse marks sick bodies as degenerate,
healthy bodies are defined as proof of ideal citizenship. It is my claim that such a discourse
informs works of literature until the end of the first half of the century; and metaphors
around illness are shaped in accordance with the official state ideology.

The second chapter looks at works by Halide Edib Adıvar, a prominent and
canonical writer of Turkish literature whose works are still included in the school
curriculum to this date. The chapter specifically focuses on Handan, one of Halide Edib’s
eyearly works in which illness functions as a proof of mental suffering of the protagonists.
Written in 1912, illness is not used as a negative trait, but rather a proof of the sacred
suffering of the heroine. In comparison to Handan, the chapter then moves on to looking at
Halide Edib’s later novel Mev’ut Hüküüm in which the Social Darwinist health policies of
the Second Constitutional Era become visible with Halide Edib’s doctor protagonist who
diagnoses not only his patients but also society in general. Although here too the heroine
suffers from both mental as well as physical illness, unlike Handan, Halide Edib does not
romanticize her physical state but rather allows a discussion on the danger of the likes of
her for the future of society. Halide Edib’s novel reveals the uneasiness of two axioms: on the one hand, it is of the social materialism, on the other it is of the spiritual. Hence, the narrative oscillates between a Zola centred naturalism and an Islamic spirituality. Even though the formal features of the naturalist novel demand for syphilitic Sara to be portrayed as dangerous, the content of the text portrays her as a victim. The uneasiness between the two axioms turns naturalism into a tragedy. It is my hypothesis in this chapter that the change in Halide Edib’s use of illness in her novels is representative of the approach towards illness in the modern Turkish republic with her later works replacing the sickly heroines with definitively healthy heroines.

The third chapter focuses on more widely popular works, melodramas by Kerime Nadir and their role in the Turkish nation-building. The chapter first looks at her best known work, *Hıçkırık* in which a heroine who suffers from tuberculosis dies and hence cannot unite with her life-time and platonic lover Kenan. This chapter reads *Hıçkırık* as a space of healing wounded Turkish masculinity in the image of Kenan through its sacrifice of Nalan. Following the death of Nalan in 1912 during the Balkan Wars, the plot bestows a happy union to Kenan by replacing the sickly and fragile Nalan with the healthy, fit and young Handan, Nalan’s daughter who is the spitting image of her mother except for her health. While Nalan’s death occurs during the Balkan Wars, Kenan’s happy ending with Nalan’s healthy and fit daughter Handan occurs when he comes back to Istanbul with the victorious troops of the independence army in 1923. The discourse that is generated to define Ottoman Empire as the sick man and the new Turkish republic as the youthful nation is in full force in Kerime Nadir’s bestselling melodramatic work. Twenty years after publishing *Hıçkırık*, Kerime Nadir wrote a new version of the novel, *Posta Gıvercini*. Here, not only does she replace tuberculosis with cancer, the plot also reveals the transformation from the Republican People’s Party rule to the Democrat Party rule with the villains of the novel portrayed as aggressive and overly active capitalists which is also evident in the protagonist’s active sexuality. In both novels, the narratives divert the focus from the wounded masculinity of the hero to the heroines whose illnesses are more visible and material. The medical discourse in other words is used to heal not the sickly heroine but the wounded masculinity of the hero and in doing so, melodrama as a form contributes to the master narrative of nation-building without forgetting nostalgia for the lost empire.

The fourth and the final chapter discusses modernist works as they place the material body in the center of narratives. In Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’, Aslı Erdoğan’s ‘Tahta Kuşlar’ and ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ and Tezer Özlü’s *Çocukluğun Soğuk*
*Geceleri*, the protagonists critique normative Turkish society from a feminist perspective, and through embracing their carnal subjectivities, they undermine the allegorically formulated identity of the ‘obedient’ woman. The docile bodies of the previous works here become charged with resistance, open to change and metamorphosis. Illness almost becomes a weapon or rather a gate that transforms these bodies from docile to resistant. Looking at *Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri* by Tezer Özlü, ‘Afrika Dansı’ by Sevim Burak, ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ and ‘Tahta Kuşlar’ by Aslı Erdoğan, the chapter reveals the overturning of dominant literary readings of the body as allegorical to material, from communal to private. In these works not only is illness not approached as a negative trait, it becomes a point of excess, transformation and metamorphosis.
Chapter 1

Untouchable Bodies of the Nation: Health and Illness in the Construction of the Ideal Citizen in Early Republican Turkey

The modernization of the state, attempts at secularity and formulating the image of the ‘new man’ and the ‘new woman’ became concerns in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. Medicine began to function as a device that would turn subjects of the empire into a population worthy of investing in. As early as 1915, Mazhar Osman titled his article ‘Türkler Mütereddimi?’ (Are Turks Degenerates?).\(^1\) With the foundation of Turkey as a nation-state, however, health came to be seen as one of the fundamental defining characteristics of the Turkish nation; health and fitness functioned as two of the core subjects for the founding members of parliament and helped justify the new regime as well as highlight the success of the newly founded republic.\(^2\) As argued by Yiğit Akın in his work on sports as a method of body discipline in the early republican period, ‘Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar’: Erken Cumhuriyet’te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor (Robust and Vigorous Children: Physical Education and Sport in Early Republican Turkey, 2004) the decrease in the numbers of contagious diseases and child mortality were celebrated as the victories of the new republic.\(^3\)

Historically, this was a crucial turning point. Thanks to the newly established health institutions and the establishment of the Ministry of Health, training in subjects such as hygiene and child rearing organized by the state-supported schools for adults, People’s Houses, as well as articles published to educate masses on the importance of health, the population that had suffered greatly in the First World War and in the War of Independence began to receive medical care. Ideologically, however, this discourse not only set clear boundaries between the sick man of Europe, the Ottoman Empire and a youthful, healthy and sturdy Turkish nation, but also engineered a narrative of history that positioned the Turkish Republic independent of its ties to the Ottoman Empire. In the period between the foundation of the republic in 1922 and the first multi-party elections in 1946 and 1950 the founding government took extensive measures to cut off Turkish society from its Ottoman


\(^2\)Ayça Alemdaroğlu, ‘Öjeni Düşüncesi’ (The Thought of Eugenics) in Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik (Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Nationalism), ed. by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), pp.414-421 (p.415).

\(^3\)Yiğit Akın, ‘Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar’: Erken Cumhuriyet’te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor (Robust and Vigorous Children: Physical Education and Sport in Early Republican Turkey) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p.92.
and Middle Eastern Islamic traditions. From its adoption of Western clocks and calendar to secularizing the state, education, and judiciary through a number of reforms it moved to reorient itself towards the West.\(^4\) As Taha Parla asserts in *Kemalist Tek-Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Otu* (One-Party Ideology of Kemalism and Six Arrows of Republican People’s Party), the historical principles of the period rejected the perceived forward movement of ‘history’ and ‘believe(d) or claim(ed) that history could stop/be stopped at one point and could start/be started again right from the beginning’.\(^5\) Hand in hand with research on history, linguistics and anthropology, medicine functioned as an ideological tool that emphasised the differences between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, and provided the Turkish state with scientific support on the close ties between the Turkish and European ‘races’.\(^6\) Pointing to the hereditary qualities of the Turkish race, the official state discourse defined healthiness and fitness as the *natural* characteristics of the ideal image of the Turk. Hence, it turned them into measures for the members of the nation to size themselves up against and identified them as prerequisites for inclusion in the nation.

The importance of medicine and explanations of the deterministic characteristics of race play a central role when the civilizing project of Kemalism of the first period of the Turkish republic is considered. Medical science was used to promote key issues: from placing ancient Turks into the history of civilization, thereby boosting nationalist pride in the masses, to proving biological connections between the Turkish race and Europeans and hence creating an organic bond between Turkey and the West; to ensuring a healthy labour and military force in the coming generations by presenting health not as a personal but as a collective responsibility, and disciplining the population during civilizing reforms. The central position of the medical authorities in the government points to the role health politics played in the formation of the nationalist discourse. In ‘Biometrics and Anthropometrics: The Twins of Turkish Modernity’, Murat Ergin writes, ‘The lack of research on republican biometrics hinges on the assumption that its proponents were simply a group of eccentric, if not mad, scientists clearly outside the scientific and political

\(^6\)Emre Arslan, ‘Türkiye’de İrklılık’ (Racism in Turkey) in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* (Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Nationalism), ed. by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gultekin (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), pp.409-426.
mainstream’. This, however, does not reflect the historical reality since ‘scholars of biometrics occupied respectable positions because biometrics translated global scientific trends into locally usable forms’. For instance, Mendelian genetics, especially concerning the hereditary laws on mixed races as argued in Gregor Mendel’s *Experiments in Plant Hybridization*, inspired the works of Mazhar Osman Uzman, Şevket Aziz Kansu and Sara Akdik, three of the most respected scientists of their time in planning the welfare of the future generations. Perihan Çambel and Sadi Irmak utilized Francis Galton and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s ideas to scientifically support the hereditary qualities of the Turkish nation as well as to use genetics as a determinant while regulating population. While scientists used this research to justify the natural capacity of the Turkish people to be modern, some of these scientists also held important positions in parliament, allowing them to enact laws in accordance with the results of their research. Among these scientist-MPs were Cemil Topuzlu, two-time mayor of Istanbul and a surgeon both nationally and internationally known, and Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, the mayor and governor of Istanbul.

Alongside research undertaken by Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti (Society for the Study of Turkish History) and Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti (Society for the Study of Turkish Language), medical research developed the myth of the Turk as a role model for every citizen: a strong, sturdy, disciplined, educated, hard-working citizen who believed in the ideology of the republic and who was willing to work for and dedicate his life to the well-being of the nation. This idealized image of the Turk was the future of the nation as well as the forgotten past. This was one of the main differences between the ideologies of the Ottoman Empire and that of the Turkish Republic, as Erik Jan Zürcher notes, ‘Nineteenth-century Ottomans certainly did not see themselves as part of the prehistoric phase of any Turkish Republic’. In other words, science functioned as the justifying force behind the

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8 Ibid.
11 The ideology of the founding government was also called the Kemalist ideology as it was named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In the 1931 party programme of CHP, the principles of Kemalism were defined as ‘republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism and revolutionism (or reformism).’ Zürcher, p.181.
reforms enacted by the government in inventing the ancient and racial characteristics of the Turk which would ensure closer ties with Western Europe and create ideological distance from the Islamic identity of the Ottoman Empire. In a period in which Western Europe defined white Caucasian race as superior, highlighting the fundamental role the prehistoric Turks played in founding civilizations provided the Turkish government with immunity from such discourse.

The duty of the members of the new Turkish nation was to remember and cultivate their inner ‘Great Turk’ whose characteristics were already in their blood. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by one of the leading scientists of the republican period, Sara Akdik (1897-1982), the first woman to receive a PhD degree in Turkey and a professor of botanical science at Istanbul University, who was herself one of the symbols of the new modern Turkish woman of the republic. She wrote in her *Genetik Bilgisinin Biyolojik, Ekonomik ve Ulusal Bakımdan Ehemmiyeti* (The Biological, Economical and National Importance of the Study of Genetics) that even though during the last period of the Ottoman Empire people had forgotten their true nature, Turkish people could still remember and know their hereditary qualities thanks to the science of genetics.¹³ Science, therefore, played a crucial role in cultivating the image of an ideal citizen. Research on history excavated the characteristics of the Turkish race; and medicine defined the body of the nation in the light of physiology. The official speeches and publications by government members also highlighted the hereditary qualities of the Turkish race. In a speech with athletes in 1926, Musafa Kemal Atatürk asserted that ‘The bad effects of the past have remained in the Turkish race,’ and as a result, ‘Our contemporary generation has found the Turkish race to be weak, sick and sickly’.¹⁴ The discourse on the importance of hereditary qualities, therefore, also functioned in defining the borders of the nation and formulated bodies that constituted the nation as well as bodies that were to be left out. Health officials of the period used the discourse to label criminals as well as patients suffering from hereditary, mental and venereal diseases as ‘degenerates’, pointing to their dangerous potential. Daniel Pick in his *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder* claimed that the discourse on degeneration was ‘self-reproducing’: it was doomed to transform criminals, alcoholics and people whose actions were defined as immoral, or people who were

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¹⁴Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, ‘Türk Sporcuları ile bir Konuşma’ (A Dialogue with Turkish Sportsmen), *Ayn Tarihi* (The Date of the Month), 30 (1926), 1602-1603.
suffering from mental diseases from ‘the effect’ to the ‘cause of crime, destitution and disease’. The discourse on what constituted the members of the nation, in other words, depended on the exclusion of certain members.

By scrutinizing the early republican discourse on health and illness, this chapter aims to reveal the broad political context of the trope of illness in works of literature, since, as Terry Eagleton contends in Literary Theory, ‘there is [...] no need to drag politics into literary theory; [...] it has been there from the beginning’. Taking my cue from a Foucauldian discursive approach, I approach literary works as active participants in the discussion, rather than representations or mirrors of the ideology. If works of literature are spaces where ideologies of bodies are contested, produced, disrupted, reflected or all at the same time, here I investigate the ideological dynamics behind such negations and scrutinize the dominant discourse regarding bodies in the foundation years of the republic. Thus, with a cultural materialist agenda, this chapter puts forth an analysis of the official discourse on health and illness in the speeches, publications and laws in the early republican, nation-building period, seeking answers to the following questions: what happens to those who do not have healthy and sturdy bodies? In a nation-building project in which ideal citizenship is defined by healthy bodies, does being sick mean failing as a citizen? It is my argument that if health and fitness were the preconditions of becoming ideal citizens, images of illness and sick bodies were inevitably pushed to the margins of nationhood, and ironically, included in the discourse through their exclusion. Akın argues that health and sports functioned as ideological tools and that this was closely related to the rising totalitarian regimes in continental Europe as well as Russia in the period. In Turkey, it seems limited to the one-party period of the Turkish Republic. While I agree with Akın about the changes in the official position of the state on health and illness after the end of the one-party period, I disagree, however, that the effects of early republican discourse on defining the nation as healthy and fit were limited to the period. From the annual nineteenth of May celebrations of Sports and Youth Day, to the definition of the Turkish citizen as ‘one that has been born as a soldier’, the meaning attributed to healthy and sick bodies in relation to the definition of ideal citizenship has remained intact, with illness

17Akın, pp.222-223.
constituting the margins of society.\textsuperscript{18}

Such inclusion of bodies in the realm of politics through administration of ‘birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation’ calls for a Foucauldian analysis on the use of bodies.\textsuperscript{19} In the first volume of the \textit{History of Sexuality}, Michel Foucault addresses sexuality as an object of control, with the state exercising its power not through its right to take, but to regulate life. Such ‘organization of power over life’ turns bodies into a machines with ‘its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the exertion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls’.\textsuperscript{20} Together, these technologies of regulation form the basis of the ‘biopolitics of population’.\textsuperscript{21} As people turn into populations, family is transformed from a model to an instrument to ensure control over this population.\textsuperscript{22} In \textit{Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison}, Foucault points to discipline as the technology that can produce docile bodies which finds its ideal form in the soldier’s body.\textsuperscript{23} Through time management, carefully ordained movements, physical discipline and departmentalization, the docility of bodies is ensured with structures of modern power becoming internalized by the individual. Accordingly, a Foucauldian perspective proves to be of pivotal importance when considering body-politics of the early republican period in which the issue of health, especially of youth and children, was considered to be of utmost importance, not only for the benefit of the general public, but also for the strengthening of man-power. With laws like The Body Discipline Law (16 July 1938) the health conditions of the population were kept under strict control; furthermore, an army-like discipline was ensured through mandatory physical exercises.

Foucault famously explains these methods of control in his lecture on ‘Governmentality’ and contends that ‘it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will

\textsuperscript{18}For a detailed research on the central role of military in Turkey’s national identity, see Ayşe Gül Altınay, \textit{The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Nurseli Yeşim Sünbüloğlu (ed.), \textit{Erkek Millet Asker Millet: Türkiye’de Militarizm, Milliyetçilik, Erkek(lik)ler} (Male Nation Soldier Nation: Militarism, Nationalism and Manhood(s) in Turkey) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013).


\textsuperscript{20}Ibid, p.139.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.


make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc.’.

24 Extensive reforms applied by the founding Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası (Republican People’s Party, CHP) with a principle of ‘revolution on everyday life’ as Paul Ginsborg puts, was an example of such governmentality. 25 To spread the principles of state ideology, journals, civil schools, and newspapers were all on duty to educate citizens. People’s Houses, were created by CHP to educate people according to the principles of the party. 26 Conferences were organized, and journals such as Ülkü (Cause), Yeni Türk (New Turk), Gürbüz Çocuklar (Robust Children) were published by the state press to spread Kemalist ideology. In the speeches of government members and in publications, the nation was portrayed as a child-nation in need of protection under the leadership of one national leader. To control populations, instil the population with national pride and guarantee reproduction rates for the sake of economic power, health regulations were held up as values of the utmost importance. Atatürk himself defined this as the responsibility of every citizen with his remark: ‘I want robust and vigorous children’. 27

Such clean-cut definition on who an ideal citizen was, however, prone to creating its counterpart, i.e who an undesirable citizen was. Moving from Carl Schmitt’s definition of sovereignty as ‘he who decides on the state of exception’, Giorgio Agamben discusses the ‘exception’ and its relation to the rule, and writes: ‘the rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it’, thus ‘the exception is truly, according to its etymological root, taken outside (ex-capere), and not simply excluded’. 28 He calls this relation the ‘relation of exception’ which means ‘something is included solely through its exclusion’. 29 What is inside, therefore, relies strictly on the banning of its outside. Bodies, Agamben argues by following Foucault, are positioned at the centre of modern politics in this model: ‘the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, zoë

24 Ibid, p.100.
26 Taha Parla suggests that the six main principles of CHP (six arrows) cannot be separated from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s direct influence. Therefore, the principles of CHP and Kemalist ideology should be thought as one and the same. Parla, pp.17-22.
27 Quoted in ibid, p.187.
29 Ibid.
and bios’.  

Pointing to the etymological root of the word ‘nation’ as nascare (to be born), he argues that ‘rights are attributed to man (or originate in him) solely to the extent that man is the immediately vanishing ground (who must never come to light as such) of the citizen’.  

This then interrupts the process, as understood by Aristotle, of natural life having the potential to be good life that is politicized life; since, being born into a nation and hence automatically being bestowed with ‘birth rights’ excludes natural life to ensure good life or politicized life. This is problematized by Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘Critique of Violence’ through the idea of the sacredness of life which equates politicized life to life itself. He writes:

The proposition that existence stands higher than a just existence is false and ignominious, if existence is to mean nothing other than mere life- and it has this meaning in the argument referred to. It contains a mighty truth, however, if existence, or, better, life […] means the irreducible, total condition that is ‘man’. […] this idea of man’s sacredness gives grounds for reflection that what is here pronounced sacred was according to ancient mythical thought the marked bearer of guilt: life itself.  

Such sacredness of life becomes visible especially in relation to issues like untouchable human rights. According to Agamben, the indistinguishability of politicized life and life leads to inclusive exclusion as the main condition of modern power. In ‘Critique of Violence’ Benjamin discusses the law-preserving or law-making mythical violence and notes, ‘Lawmaking is powermaking, and, to that extent, an immediate manifestation of violence’. With its permanent violent revolutionary characteristic, the modern state ends up being in a permanent state of exception in which the rule is applied by not being applied, that is suspended, and thereby it becomes the realm of indistinction between inside and outside. This is, therefore, the exceptional suspension of the rule which, according to Agamben, is the rule itself. People in a state of exception are not freed from the law but are included in the law through exception. They are not, from then on, considered as part of the community, but they are included as merely bare life – that is, neither human nor animal.

The figure of bare life is neither zoê nor bios and exists neither in natural nor in social life.
but appears when ‘zoê is separated from bios, and bios (ethical and political life) calls zoê (biological life) into question’. 34

He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but is rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and the law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order. 35

This finds its most powerful expression in the figure of homo sacer, whose killing is not a crime but who also cannot be sacrificed. He is, in other words, banned from both human and divine law.

It is my argument in this chapter that when a nation is defined in terms of its supreme health and its members are defined as being born with a hereditary strength, fitness and health, such conditioning automatically endows individuals with a biological debt for the greater good of the nation, and strips the unhealthy ones of their membership of the community, reducing them to bare lives. The example of Turkish nation-building, in this regard, is no exception; if healthiness, fitness and sturdiness are the prerequisites of the Turkish nation, then nation relies on the exclusion of sick bodies. It, hence, creates its own exceptions in the image of untouchable bodies. The fiction I scrutinize in the following chapters grapples with this, with the images of untouchable bodies functioning as warnings or figures of resistance or both. It is, therefore, crucial to have a detailed discussion on how the sick bodies were excluded from the discourse on nation to understand how the fiction negotiated, instrumentalized and/or resisted such an image.

1. Figuring the Ideal Citizen: the Myth of the Great Turk

The idea of nation had been a subject of discussion roughly since the second half of the nineteenth-century in the Ottoman Empire, first discussed under three unifying concepts: these dominant identity trends included Ottomanism, which aimed to gather the masses together under the mutual character of the Ottoman Empire; Pan-Islamism, which was instrumentalizing the idea of Islam to gather Muslims under one roof, and finally Pan-Turkism, which proposed a racial description as a unifying trait for the first time. 36
1906, the Committee of Union and Progress adopted the aim of turning the Ottoman Empire into a nation-state, identified by its Turkishness.\(^37\) What was new in the republican Turkey, however, was that the ideologists of the new regime positioned the characteristics of the Turkish nation-state in opposition to Islamic characteristics of the Ottoman Empire. As Ömür Birler argues, ‘different from post-colonial nationalism, in the Turkish case the formed “other” was not addressing the West, but rather the recent Ottoman past, which was interestingly accused of having alien elements to what was “Turkish”’.\(^38\) Defining the Ottoman past as one that had damaged the ‘noble’ traits of Turkishness, members of the new Republic instrumentalized historical, linguistic, anthropological and biometrical sciences to engineer the identity of new/original Turkish citizen. Turkish national myth had claims of historical continuity with pre-historic Turkish communities, one that reached far beyond the limits of the Ottoman Empire. While historians were given the duty of proving the inborn qualities of Turkish race, language reforms and anthropometric studies aided the process.

On 28 April 1930, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ordered a council to start working on the history of the Turks. Afet İnan, a historian, one of Atatürk’s adopted daughters and an exemplary new Turkish woman was placed at the head of this council. With her leadership, the history council produced the ‘Turkish History Thesis’ which argued that the roots of Turkish history preceded the Ottomans.\(^39\) By claiming that ‘Turks were descendants of white (Aryan) inhabitants of Central Asia, who had been forced by drought and hunger to migrate to other areas, such as China, Europe and the Near East [and] in doing so, had created the world’s greatest civilizations’, the thesis not only aimed to instil national pride, but also ‘separate [the national identity] from the immediate past, that is to say the Ottoman era’.\(^40\) In 1930, the council published Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları (The Main Lines of Turkish History) where ‘only 50 pages of 605 pages were devoted to Ottoman history’.\(^41\)

While the duty of the Society for the Study of Turkish History was to reveal the true

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\(^37\)Ibid, p.72. 
\(^40\)Zürcher, p.191. 
characteristics of the Turks, the Society for the Study of the Turkish Language, which was founded by the history society, was tasked with proving that the ‘Turkish and the Indo-European languages were related’. While on the one hand research was continuing, on the other hand non-Turkish words in the language had become a matter of concern. As a first move in 1928, the Arabic alphabet was officially discarded in favour of the Latin alphabet in the hope of increasing literacy in Turkey and taking Turkey one step closer to Europe. An article from The Times of London on 31 August 1928 shows that the decision was well received by Europe.

By this step the Turks, who for centuries were regarded as a strange and isolated people by Europe, have drawn closer than ever to the West. It is a great reform, worthy of the remarkable chief (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) to whom the Turkish people has entrusted its destinies.

Yet, the language itself contained many words from Persian, Arabic, and French. The domination of different languages over Turkish was also a burden for overall communication in Turkey due to language differences in urban and rural areas, as well as of the bureaucrats and the general public. As a result, the next step was to Turkify the language:

There was a pressing need to raise morale, to make the people see themselves as a nation with a great past and a great destiny, who would one day take their place among the civilized nations of the West. Turks must have no feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis Europe; they were not outsiders. For the moment they might be poor relations, but relations they were. To this end, history teaching in the country’s schools was based on the postulate that all the famous peoples of antiquity were either Turks themselves or had been civilized by Turks. In the same spirit, it was thought desirable to show that the Turkish language was not out on a limb but had affiliations with all the great languages of the world.

With the publication of the Ottoman-Turkish dictionary by Türk Dili Araştırma Kurumu (Institution of Research on Turkish Language) Arabic and Persian words within the everyday Ottoman language were officially replaced by words with Turkish roots.

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42 Çağaptay, p.88.
44 Quoted in Lewis, p.38.
46 Ibid, pp.41-42.
47 Çağaptay, ‘Otuzlarda Türk Milliyetçiliğinde İrk, Dil ve Etnisite’ (Race, Language, Ethnicity in Turkish Nationalism of 1930s) in Modern Türkiye’de Siyası Düşünce Vol.4: Milliyetçilik (Political Thoughts in Modern Turkey Vol.4: Nationalism), ed. by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları,
The government started a campaign to encourage people to use Turkish words. Forms were released to the public so that they could inform the authorities of the words they used and thus new official Turkish words could be established. From schoolteachers to members of the military, from civil servants of various departments such as agriculture or environment to the members of parliament, all were assigned the duty of listing the words in public use. After studying 150 books, scholars added Turkish words that were either no longer in use or had never been used in Turkey, to the list. As a result, the derived list was published as ‘Tarama Dergisi’ (Journal of Survey) in 1934 with 90,000 Turkish words. Geoffrey Lewis defines this period as ‘the tower of Babel’, with everyone deriving and using different ‘Turkish’ words for the same meaning (for instance, there were twenty six different words for ‘mind’). The chaotic atmosphere continued until 1935 when Dr Hermann F. Kvergic sent his La Psychologie de quelques éléments des langues turques to Atatürk. This forty-seven-page text was a study of the first language, proposing that ‘Turkish was the first human language to take shape’. Despite being received critically by Turkish linguists, Atatürk welcomed the idea, demanding that the Institute of Research on Turkish Language to work on the theory further. With additional research on the roots of Turkish, the ‘Sun Language Theory’ was formed which claimed that there was evidence that the language that was used by primitive men was connected to Turkish. This meant that Turkish people had played an important role in the history of civilization, and therefore it was deemed unnecessary to try to remove the foreign words from Turkish, since according to this theory every language had derived from Turkish. The Institute of Research on Turkish Language officially adopted the theory in 1936 but the idea gradually lost its popularity toward the late thirties.

As Kerem Öktem argues in Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989, the ‘ethno-national identity (of Turkey) [... ] was Turkishness (Semi-secular muslim)’. Such a formulation,
however, meant Turkifying other ethnicities living in the country, for ‘in theory non-Turkish citizens could benefit from citizenship rights by denouncing their ancestral roots’. In his article, ‘Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s’, Soner Çağaptay discusses the role of race in the creation of Turkey as a nation state and notes that ‘as late as the 1920s, Turkishness had been mostly defined independently of race’. In the 1930s the cultural nationalism of the official discourse was transformed into a racial nationalism and the whole country was said to be in service of the ‘real’ Turkish people, while non-Turkish people ‘[didn’t] have any rights over it’. Therefore, the cultural nationalism of the 1920s which sought a type of cultural assimilation for non-Turks was changed into racial nationalism by the 1930s which sought a unified nation that was said to be originally Turkish, and whose broad lines were drawn by the myth of ‘The Great Turk’ in the 1930s. Perhaps Atatürk’s Nutuk (Speech), which he read to the Grand Turkish Assembly over five days, was the greatest embodiment of this ideology. He addressed his speech to the ‘Great Turkish Nation’, and ended by addressing the youth, holding them responsible for protecting the freedom and continuity of the Turkish Republic. He concluded by telling the youth that, ‘the strength [they] need is embedded in [their] noble blood’. Turkish nationalism now had an essentialist shape and being born was a privilege as the biological responsibility of living the life of an ideal Turkish citizen who was heroic, hard-working, robust and a natural-born soldier was an opportunity not to be squandered.

The Great Turk was promoted as the role model for Turkish citizens as a natural identity due to hereditary racial qualities and inner ancient values. The research carried out in the 1930s by Şevket Aziz Kansu, an important scientist of the period, head of Turkey’s first Anthropology Investigation Centre and a member of the Turkish History Council which was founded following Atatürk’s request, is a good example that points to the collaboration of science and the dominant ideology. To prove the connection between Turkish and European races, he investigated the physical characteristics of 2,486 children, after which he came to the conclusion that Turks were connected to the Caucasian race. Another relevant piece of research is that of Sadi Irmak, who was an academic in the

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57Cagaptay, ‘Race, Assimilation and Kemalism’, p.86.
58Çağaptay, ‘Race, Assimilation and Kemalism’, p.86.
59Parla, p.192.
60Öktem, p.33.
Faculty of Medicine in Istanbul University, Prime Minister from 17 November 1974 to 31 March 1975, and was part of the group that prepared a new constitution after the coup d’etat of 1980. His research on blood types and fingerprints was presented at the Turkish History Congress of 1937 and was published by the State of Turkey Press, which concluded that ‘[The Turkish race] differed from Eastern and Southern Asian nations and showed resemblance to European nations’. As Ergin plausibly argues, anthropometrics were used to create ‘knowledge’ of the ‘whiteness, Europeanness and ancientness of Turks’ while biometric scholarship was used to support the information obtained by anthropometrics. Therefore, the early republican period was highly involved with racial identification to prove ‘the Turks’ innate capacity for modernization’ which resulted in the spread of eugenics in Turkey. Biometric studies were perceived as necessary in a period when European eugenicists were defining non-European people as inferior.

An ongoing concern with one’s own racial inferiority can be clearly observed in the head of the History Council, Afet İnan’s memoirs. Afet İnan studied at the University of Geneva under the supervision of anthropologist-historian Eugene Pittard, who defined history as ‘a contest between superior and inferior races’. In her memoirs she recalls mentioning to Atatürk a French book that suggested that the Turkish race belonged to a ‘séconnaire’ race group. As a result Atatürk requested she work on this subject and prove it wrong. Afet İnan turned this into the main purpose of her work as a historian: her PhD thesis was entitled ‘Türkiye Halkının Antropolojik Karakterleri ve Türkiye Tarihi: Türk Irkının Vatanı Anadolu (64.000 kişi üzerinde anket)’ (Turkish History and the Anthropological Characteristics of People of Turkey: Anatolia, The Land of Turkish Race (Survey on 64000 People)) in which she looked at the physiological characteristics of Turkish people, including their skull sizes, skin colours, and blood types. In the introductory part of her thesis, she explained that she had completed her research on 64000 people with a team who had been assigned to this project by the state. The ministry of health aided the research both by assigning participants as well as providing financial

62Sadi Irmak, Türk Irkının Biyolojisine Dair Araştırmalar (Kan Grupları ve Parmak İzleri) (The Research on the Biology of Turkish Race (Blood Types and Finger Prints) (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1937), p.5.
63Ergin, pp.281-304.
64Ibid, p.282.
65Öktem, p.31.
66Afet İnan, Türkiye Halkının Antropolojik Karakterleri ve Türkiye Tarihi:Türk Irkının Vatam Anadolu (64.000 kişi üzerinde anket), (Turkish History and the Anthropological Characteristics of People of Turkey: Anatolia, The Land of Turkish Race (Survey on 64000 People) (Ankara: TürkiyeTarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1947), p.67.
67Ibid.
resources. Eugene Pittard himself wrote an introduction for the Turkish edition of her thesis. Published in 1947, the conclusion of her thesis was that Turkish people had European roots.

Ibid, p.75.
These various projects not only claimed an organic bond between the Western European civilization and the Turkish civilization in Anatolia, but also highlighted the natural traits of the Turkish race as a unifying umbrella, inventing a historical continuation between the modern Turkish nation and pre-historical Turks, thereby rejecting Ottoman heritage. As Zurcher explains:

On the one hand, the emphasis on the Turkish heritage, even if it was largely mythical, as something separate from the Middle Eastern and Islamic civilization of the Ottoman Empire, made it easier to exchange elements from traditional Middle Eastern civilization for those of the West. On the other hand, it instilled in the Turks, especially those of the younger generations, a strong feeling of national identity and national pride, sometimes bordering on a feeling of superiority, which in a sense psychologically counterbalanced the need to follow Europe.  

Prompted by the official ideology, unlike the sick man of Europe, the new republic of Turkey was young, modern and progressive as well as healthy and fit. The new ideologists of the new republic took every opportunity to highlight this distinction. From architecture to changes in language or clothes, the ‘old-young’ and ‘sick-healthy’ dichotomies were the grand determinants of the early republican ideology.  

Accordingly, architecture was another discipline harnessed to highlight the distinction between the Turkish republic and the Ottoman Empire. While Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, was seen as the symbol of the old decrepit days, the new capital of the republic, Ankara, was filled with modern architecture. In 1933 the Ministry of the Interior began to publish an official propaganda journal, _La Turquie Kemaliste_ in French for a foreign readership. As the publication continued, German, Italian and eventually English articles were published in the volumes of 1940s. The aim of the articles was to represent the characteristics of the new, modern Turkey in Europe. In each volume, a section entitled ‘Ankara Construit’ presented news about the new architecture of Ankara, which was defined as good enough to “even” compete with the architecture of Germany.
and Italy’.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{Figure 4.} ‘Reitsport’, \textit{La Turquie Kemaliste}, Public domain.

\textbf{Figure 5.} ‘Sports’, \textit{La Turquie Kemaliste}, Public domain.

\textsuperscript{74}Öktem, p.33.
As shown in figures 1 and 3, Ankara was represented not as a complete and finished city but as a city that stood for progress, itself a work in progress. For instance an article entitled ‘Ankara-Istanbul’, reveals the comparison as one between a new progressive Turkey and the dark days of the Ottoman Empire:

Ankara is a city of the future. Istanbul is a city of the past. […] It gleams with cleanliness like the freshly scrubbed face of a youngster on his first day in school. [Atatürk and his followers] wanted and they have for a capital an absolutely new city which would symbolize the breaking away from the old and which would demonstrate to themselves and their visitors what can be done in a hitherto backward Turkey.’ […] [Ankara is] a city which has no patience with worn out yesterdays but thinks only in terms of better tomorrows.75

La Turquie Kemaliste functions as a highly significant source that reveals the early republican ideology of progression. In addition to architectural advancements in Ankara the journal included many photos of people playing tennis, taking part in athletics or swimming. Figure 2 shows that what Ankara represented as a city was also reflected in its youth. Both young and in development, the bodies of the nation and Ankara’s architecture were aiming for ‘better tomorrows’. Furthermore, figures 4 and 5 not only show scenes from an emerging capital city, but also feature a city filled with the healthy, sturdy and sporty bodies of its members. This new Turkey was clearly ready to compete with Germany and Italy with its modern architecture and with its citizens, all young and healthy enough to participate in all sports. All dressed in white, the young people in these photos symbolize a healthy looking nation where cleanliness is equated with self-care. Thus, healthy and fit bodies were embedded in this new identity of the ideal Turkish citizen as a healthy, fit, sporty, fashionable, civilized and Western individual. Youthfulness, in other words, was the symbol of the new capital as it was the embodiment of progression. However, youth also brings about the idea of ‘not growing up’ and being eternally in a state of progression. This message is also evident in the repeated photos of unfinished building sites in Ankara in the journal. The progression of these buildings is portrayed as a prospect for the future; in other words, progression in progress. As argued by Jed Etsy in Unseasonable Youth, the new nation was ‘eternally adolescent, always developing but never developed enough’.76

Looking at cultural colonialism in India, Ashis Nandy contends that the theory of social progress functioned in inventing cultural differences in the colonies and that ‘what was childlikeness of the child and childishness of immature adults [...] became the lovable and unlovable savagery of primitives and the primitivism of subject societies’.  

Adopting Europe’s orientalist figuration of what it perceived to be its other, Turkey did not contest the discourse but declared itself free from it by claiming a natural connection between itself and Europe, while at the same time applying the outlook onto its own unwanted qualities. Therefore, the Turkish nation was divided into two groups: masses were either childish, that is, ‘incorrigible’, ‘in need of administration’ hence undesirable, or childlike that is ‘corrigible’ and could be reformed ‘through Westernization [and] modernization’. In this respect, medicine functioned as a device in the civilizing project in Turkey, helping to repress or cast aside unwanted traits, and proving the natural bond between the Turkish and race and European races and removing any questions regarding authenticity and imitation. If the bond between Europe and Turkey could be scientifically proven, the Westernizing reforms would not be seen as forced changes, but rather, reminders of the forgotten qualities of the race.

2. Bodies of Exception: Threshold of Nation

In 1933 Mazhar Osman Uzman published a one-volume health almanac as a special edition to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the republic. The almanac included various articles by famous doctors and physicians, as well as literary authors. In addition to medical articles, the almanac also included recommendations on daily subjects such as what to eat in what month or what to wear in which season, as well as articles on scientific recommendations for what would be considered as non-scientific subjects, from finding an ‘ideal spouse’ to how to ‘cure laziness’. Mazhar Osman explained the principle behind the publication by noting that ‘doctors [were] the most important authority when it [came] to the social welfare of a country’. Accordingly, in an article entitled ‘Akıl Ölçüsüne İhtiyaç’ (Need for Mental Measurement), he focused on the central place of psychiatrists in the welfare of the country and suggested that in areas that ranged from marriage to the law, from education to choosing an occupation, doctors’ opinions

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78 Ibid, p.16.
79 Mazhar Osman, ‘Akıl Ölçüsüne İhtiyaç’ (Need for Mental Measurement) in *Sıhhat Almanağı (Health Almanac)* (Istanbul: Kader Matbaasi, 1933). pp.627-629 (p.627).
mattered. For instance, according to Uzman, a doctor could observe the character traits of engaged couples and decide whether they made a good match. A doctor’s expertise was not only limited to matrimonial issues however. How to raise a child, the nerves of a teenager and, later in life, what job one should choose were subjects that all required a doctor’s assistance. This attitude, which ignored individual free will, was considered necessary by Uzman, for if a doctor did not interfere in these daily subjects, the result could be seen as a waste of resources. For instance, he suggested that whether a young person was suitable to serve as a soldier was a matter that should be decided by a psychiatrist. In addition to reasons like stopping a nervous person from harming his fellow soldiers due to a nervous attack, the doctor must also consider whether a soldier was ‘too dumb,’ meaning his services were nothing but a waste of money for the country. Individuals were, to some extent, seen as subjects in whom the state invested time and resources. Thus, marriage and divorce, the wellbeing of a couple’s child, choosing the right occupation or the right spouse were just a few areas in which it was expected that doctors would intervene, as, according to Uzman, one’s character, abilities and worth depended on one’s physiological traits.

Some articles in the almanac show the central roles that physiognomy and determinism played in the medical trends of the period. One article, entitled ‘Mütereddi Çocuklar’ (Degenerate Children) described the appearance of lazy children as ones with thick lips that are turned inwards along with thin eyebrows. Another article whose subject was children who did not conform. The author of the article, Dr. İsmail Ziya Bey warned the readers that half-mad people were hard to recognise, were everywhere and could be anyone. They were not entirely ‘mad’, therefore their situation was not easy to diagnose immediately. However, ‘half-mad’ children could be recognised as their constant misbehaving gave them away. He wrote: ‘we are the products of our dead ones’, suggesting that personality traits were hereditary. Thus these ‘half-mad’, misbehaving children, he argued, were the products of bad seeds: parents with histories of alcohol or drug addiction or parents whose mental health was fragile. He noted that when these half-mad people were babies, they cried and caused distress more than other babies did. They then grew up to be misbehaving students,
hence they threatened the well-being and progression of society. His proposed solution to
this problem was to collect and imprison these children to stop them from harming society.

According to the general principle behind these articles, biology was the major
determinant of one’s habits, choices, merits or flaws; thus hereditary qualities should be
given the highest importance. Medicine, therefore, was the primary science when it came
to social engineering. Mazhar Osman Uzman’s almanac was a strong representative of the
official eugenicist agenda of the government, since his research not only occupied a central
position in the state-supported scientific apparatus, but his opinions were also echoed by
the leading politicians of the time such as Sadi Irmak and Fahrettin Kerim Gökay.

Furthermore, his eugenicist remarks were not limited to his health almanac. He gave a
lecture entitled ‘Ögenik’ (Eugenics) in 1939 at a conference organised by the ruling party
CHP; later on, the state press published his speech on the topic of producing high quality
new generations. In these texts he defended the general idea of race rehabilitation for the
welfare of the country. One of his suggestions for citizens was not to marry ‘degenerates’
or anyone whose family tree revealed traces of ‘degeneracy’. His definition of degenerates
consisted of the urban poor (prostitutes, alcoholics, young criminals and beggars), the
mentally ill (epileptics and schizophrenics) and psychopaths (the rich who gained money
either by inheritance or through other means such as fraud).85 One of the elements to
highlight here is how he grouped criminals and sick people together as degenerates or as
untouchable bodies. According to Uzman, all these groups participated in hindering
national progress. In his speech on ‘Eugenics’, he defined degenerate people as ‘parasites’
who could only live with the aid of other people, as opposed to healthy people who were
the source of wealth for the progression of the country.86

Considering that many of these health authorities, including Mazhar Osman,
received their medical education mostly in Germany and France, at a time when qualities
of heredity were used to create a hierarchical explanation for colonialism and race
relations, the discourse was quite close to its Western equivalents. Gregor Mendel’s
Experiments on Plant Hybridization (1865) was particularly influential on the eugenicist
research undertaken by the Turkish medical authorities. While Galton’s opinions were
supported and referenced by these politicians/scientists, Charles Scott Sherrington, H. J.
Muller and Margaret Sanger were among the other names referenced. In 1927, Sanger’s

85Mazhar Osman, ‘Tavsiyeler’ (Recommendations) in Sıhhat Almanağı (Health Almanac) (Istanbul: Kader
Matbaası, 1933), p.83.
Family Limitation was translated into Turkish by Dr. Fuad. Fahreddin Kerim Gökay lectured on Mendel and Galton in CHP seminars. Such import of the contemporary European explanations of the qualities of heredity, coupled with the Turkish history and language theses that claimed a racial connection between the Turkish and European races, point to a self-orientalization which fed the discourse on progression and the need to ‘catch up’ with Western Europe in areas like finance, politics, culture and the military. By adopting a eugenicist discourse and inventing the myth of prehistoric Turks, the ideologists of the early republican period were able to attribute the desired qualities of the population to biological and racial qualities that pointed to a natural bond between the Turkish and Western European races. Such discourses provided them with the necessary support for the direction that the Turkish republic was choosing: Turks were biologically and therefore, naturally closer to Europe than to the Middle East. This, also, took the ideologists off the hook when it came to questions of authenticity and imitation. With the scientific research proving the qualities of the ancient Turks, the authentic Turkish identity was not sacrificed with reforms, they were on the contrary rediscovered.

The discourse of hereditary ‘inborn qualities’ not only functioned in feeding the nationalist myth, positioning Turks as a race as the founders of world civilization but also in creating the necessary biopower to guarantee the increase of a fit population. After years of being damaged by wars and contagious diseases, the population was low and thus reproduction was promoted, especially for financial reasons. Eugenics was used as part of a solution to the financial problems of the country, with human power being regarded as the primary resource which also meant that members of the nation were born with biological responsibilities. This notion is explained by Foucault as follows:

… the analysis of heredity was placing sex (sexual relations, venereal diseases, matrimonial alliances, perversions) in a position of ‘biological responsibility’ with regard to the species: not only could sex be affected by its own diseases, it could also, if it was not controlled, transmit diseases or create others that would afflict future generations. Thus it appeared to be the source of an entire capital for the species to draw from. Whence the medical-but also political-project for organizing a state management of marriages, births, and life expectancies; sex and its fertility had to be administered. The medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics were the two great innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century.87

Accordingly, in the First National Medicine Congress in 1925, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü referred to healthy men as the primary condition for the financial and social

87Foucault, Sexuality, p.118.
betterment of the country as well as a guarantee for national defence.\textsuperscript{88} Similarly the mayor of Istanbul, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, remarked in 1934 that ‘one for all, all for one’ and suggested that ‘today an individual is the most income generated source of capital’ in his *Eugenique Meselesi ve Irk Sağlamlığı* (The Issue of Eugenique and Sturdiness of Race).\textsuperscript{89} In 1930, Mazhar Osman wrote that the increase of ‘working, healthy hands’ was positively correlated with the wealth of the country.\textsuperscript{90} In 1941, he formulated the definition of a good citizen and wrote, ‘A person proves that he is a good citizen by protecting his life’.\textsuperscript{91} With these statements, bodies were not only *fattened* with meaning in the process of transformation from the monarchy to the republic but individual lives were also turned into allegorical lives with added ‘biological responsibility’. They highlighted ‘the politicized biological life,’ or the combination of *zôê* and *bios* as the primary event of the modern state, and defined the good citizen as one with a healthy body.

Harnessing human capital, however, required wide ranging health reforms that would be supported by law as well as the media and education. The war had already made the population more fragile and open to the effects of epidemics. Malaria, trachoma, tuberculosis and various venereal diseases had spread throughout the country; with insufficient health services the mortality rate was high, miscarriage was a common problem and child death rates were also high.\textsuperscript{92} Large-scale research took place to create a health map of the country.\textsuperscript{93} The Health Ministry was formed in 1920. After centralising the health services, a focus on curative medicine was transformed into a preference for preventative medicine.\textsuperscript{94} As Laden Yurttagürler suggests, this move that signalled the transformation of the individual body into social body.\textsuperscript{95}

These concerns were reflected in the national newspapers that included articles written to recommend marriage between healthy members of society alongside recommendations that people learn the medical history of their spouses-to-be. Writers of these articles considered the health of parents as a key determinant in their future children’s health. Mazhar Osman, for instance, encouraged healthy people to produce as many

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\textsuperscript{88} Akın, pp.89-90.
\textsuperscript{90} Akın, p.89.
\textsuperscript{91} Quoted in Ergin, p.286.
\textsuperscript{92} Salgır, p.294.
\textsuperscript{93} Yurttagüler, p.61.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, p.57.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
children as possible. He was one of the key supporters of using financial incentives to encourage parents to have children alongside special taxation for unmarried or childless persons.\textsuperscript{96} By 1930 the Health Law was in support of these pro-natal propositions. The law banned abortion and those who intentionally miscarried or assisted the process were imprisoned for up to three years.\textsuperscript{97} The first Public Hygiene Act was legislated in 1930, starting an official war against the epidemics of the time. With this act a new era of strict control over bodies began. Government authorities such as doctors, architects, teachers and neighbourhood administrators were from then on responsible for the classification and diagnosis of individuals. Suspicions of possible outbreaks of diseases like scarlet fever, cholera or rabies were to be reported to authorities like the police or local security forces within twenty-four hours.\textsuperscript{98} The People’s Houses also offered courses on how to remain healthy. Ülkü included various articles teaching people the hygiene of everyday life.

To protect populations from epidemics, support the reproduction of ‘fit’ genes and ensure ‘good’ hereditary qualities, the state and individuals were held to account. A professor at Istanbul University, Fahri Arel, gave a speech entitled ‘Sokak Kazaları’ (Street Accidents) as a part of CHP conference series, in which he suggested that knowing what to do in the case of an accident held great importance since ‘what use is a child to himself or to his country if he loses his legs […] he is doomed to live as a parasite on the back of society and society is doomed to feed him’.\textsuperscript{99} Similarly, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay included patients of mental illnesses and alcoholics as well as children of ‘national intermingling’ as threats to national hygiene. His arguments were not only limited to illnesses, since race was an important part of his speech. According to Gökay, two people from different ‘races’ reproducing could cause the child to have two characters. He argued that these children tended to develop ‘bad’ morals and weak characters.

Despite claims of discontinuity from the Ottoman Empire, neither the pro-natal laws that banned abortion nor the centralization of the health system were new, as these were policies that were put into action during the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. These regulations, however, functioned as the key subjects to compliment the new regime by highlighting the victories in war against illnesses. Mazhar Osman, for instance, suggested in his \textit{Sıhhat Almanağı} that the health system and medicine had improved after

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{96}Uzman, ‘Öjenik’, p.7. \\
\textsuperscript{97}‘Türk Ceza Kanunu’ (Turkish Crime Law) in \textit{TC Resmi Gazete} (Turkish Republic Official Gazette), 320 (13 March 1926). Lines 468-470. \\
\textsuperscript{98}Ibid, p.60-63. \\
\end{flushleft}
the foundation of the republic. According to him, while Turkish people were dying rapidly due to poverty, wars and a bad health system before the foundation of the republic, non-Turks and minority groups were getting richer, leading much more lavish lives and growing in number like ‘rabbits’. He pointed to the rising population as the biggest success of the new republic. Distinct from the discourse in the Ottoman Empire, his choice of metaphor of ‘rabbit’ for non-Turkish people highlights the discourse around degeneration and eugenics. As will discussed in the following chapter through the example of Halide Edib’s fiction, such discourse inevitably affected the nationalist fiction of the period with normative and regulative characters portrayed as distinctively healthy and aware of their biological responsibilities for the nation.

Although a significant number of ideologues of the period were in support of positive eugenics, none of these politicians were in favour of negative eugenics. In the discussions on race rehabilitation, the focus was on stopping people with venereal or mental diseases from getting married. Alcoholism, criminality, ‘bad morality’ were all considered to be signs of degeneration. Although the enactment of the law on sterilization in Germany was often discussed, the idea was approached carefully by health officials. Mazhar Osman and Fahrettin Kerim Gökay both questioned the idea and decided that it was a step too far, and that the careful planning of the population would be enough to rehabilitate the Turkish race. Yet this did not stop them from pointing to the untouchables of society in various articles and speeches. For instance Naciye Emine Hanım, a laboratory scientist entitled her article in Mazhar Osman’s almanac ‘You must get the blood of your wetnurses, cooks and maids checked’, and suggested that couples should demand each other’s blood tests for syphilis rather than trying to find each other’s financial details. Another one of these articles was entitled ‘İçtimai Dertlerimizden Biri’ (One of our Social Problems). The author of the article, Dr Ali Eşref B. suggested that gonorrhoea was one of the biggest problems in society, since young boys were not educated on this important subject. According to him, people who were responsible for the spread of the disease were prostitutes and women who conducted sexual affairs. The author thus defined women as the source of the disease and suggested that even a woman who caught the disease from her husband could be blamed for not marrying a man with better morals.

100 Prof. Dr. Fahreddin Kerim Gökay, Kısırlaştırmanın Rolü (The Role of Sterilization) (Istanbul: Kader Basmevi, 1938); Uzman, Ögenik, p.11.
Clearly, both male and female bodies were considered the most valuable of resources for the state. The birth-rate agenda expected women’s bodies to perform and the prerequisite for this was a body healthy enough to ‘give birth for the sake of the country’. For instance, Ahmet Fetgeri, a supporter of the idea that women had to be encouraged to engage in sports to ensure the health of their bodies, wrote that ‘one of the biggest facts that all the world accepts is that a sturdy child can only be born from a strong and healthy mother’. The ‘new woman’ was either dedicated to breeding children as ‘the mother of new generations’ or was deprived of any sexuality. Both versions of this ‘new woman’ were supposed to be educated, sporty and healthy. Modernity also gave her physical appearance a new importance. In 1929, the first women’s beauty contest was organised almost as a proof of the beauty of the nation. In 1932, after Kerime Halis was chosen as ‘Miss Universe’ in an international beauty contest, Atatürk commented on this incident, saying that ‘since [he] knew historically that the Turkish race [was] the most beautiful race on earth, [he] found it natural that a Turkish girl was chosen’. In a weekly newspaper, *Yeni Adam* (New Man) in 1937, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu gave this definition of beauty: ‘The new woman also brings about the idea of a new body. Not a coquettish, fragile, sickly beauty; but a strong, healthy, athletic, fresh beauty that is indicative of success’.

Women’s emancipation, too, was posited as one of the victories of the new republic. The early feminists of the Ottoman Empire had supported an Islamic feminism which demanded equality for women in public life. The movement included prominent elite women of the time including writers such as Fatma Aliye, Emine Semiye and Halide Edib. Islam was the basis of the feminist movements of the Ottoman Empire and gender equality was sought without crossing the dominant Muslim-Ottoman identity. Various journals such as *Şükuzefar* (Bloomed Garden, 1886), *Hamınlara Mahsus Gazete* (The Newspaper for Women, 1895), *Demet* (A Bunch, 1908), *Mehasin* (Virtues, 1908-1909), *Kadin* (Woman, 1908-1909), *Kadin* (Woman, 1911-1912), *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World, 1913-1914/1918-1921), and *Kadınlık* (Womanhood, 1914) became platforms for 

102 Quoted in Akin, p.118.
104 Parla, p.193.
106 Zihnioğlu, p.58.
107 Ibid, p.53.
women to explicitly discuss and debate women’s conditions as well as demand change. These journals are of the utmost importance for our understanding of the women’s liberation movement in a historical continuation as they ‘document that women had begun the struggle for their legal rights (which they would later acquire under the Republic) after the initiation of the modernization process of the empire; they showed how women had struggled to be equal citizens with men, had tried to expand their social life and space, and had organized to achieve their goals’.  

Borrowing Şirin Tekeli’s term ‘state feminism’ and Nilüfer Göle’s term ‘Kemalist pride’, Ayşe Durakbaşa summarizes this shift pertaining to women’s status as follows,

...within the framework of Turkish nationalism, the cultural reference for authentic national identity shifted from Islamic culture to the original culture of the Turks before they accepted Islam. Kemal Atatürk and the other leaders of the Turkish nationalist struggle and the Turkish republic made a radical break with Islamic law and tradition that had a direct impact on the area of legislation related to women’s position in society. Hence the efforts for reform in women’s status culminated in the ‘state feminism’ of the new Turkish Republic, which provided all Turkish women with some equal rights in the area of law, education, and political life. Kemalist elites realized the project of modernization to its full extent, which up to the present day has proved to be the major source of ‘Kemalist pride’.

Accordingly, movements of women’s emancipation, led by women themselves since the nineteenth-century, were omitted in the new discourse. Şirin Tekeli, a historian of women’s movements in Turkey suggests that giving suffrage rights to women was a strategic move on the part of the Turkish Republic to prove itself more democratic than Germany and Italy in the pre-war period in which Atatürk himself was accused of dictatorship by the Western media. The idea that ‘women did not take these rights, but rather they were given these rights’ was promoted officially and resulted in the women’s movement being quite limited to and dependant on the nationalist republican movement. Nezihe Muhiddin was one of the excluded figures of this period. Her attempt at founding a political party, the Women’s Party in 1923, was rejected and was regarded as a form of separatism. It was dismantled,

108 Demirdirek, p.66.
110 Şirin Tekeli, ‘Tek Parti Döneminde Kadın Hareketi De Bastırıldı’ (Women’s Movement was Oppressed in the One-Party Period) in Sol Kemalizme Bakıyor (Left is Looking at Kemalism) (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991), pp.93-107 (pp.96-98).
111 Zihnioğlu, p.149.
while its members were banned from politics. According to Zihnioğlu the main conflict between Muhiddin and state ideology was that, unlike state supported historians, Muhiddin did not perceive history as something that could be stopped and reversed. She looked at the women’s movement in its evolution in time, whereas the founding government rejected every bond with the Ottoman Empire and treated history as something that could be rewritten.

The new mission of the Republic was to help raise young girls appropriately and to educate village women through Kemalist ideology. Such aims not only highlighted healthy youth as the prerequisite characteristic of Turkish modernization, but also its predominantly patriarchal characteristic. In the case of India, Ashis Nandy discusses childhood in relation to the ideology of progress in which childhood ‘increasingly looked like a blank slate on which adults must write their moral codes – an inferior version of maturity, less productive and ethical, and badly contaminated by the playful, irresponsible and spontaneous aspects of human nature’. The treatment of women by the Kemalist state both combines the idea of the child nation in need of guidance and it positions women as the eternal daughters of the republic. As Zihnioğlu puts it, ‘women whose hands Atatürk held’ was the promoted image of new Turkish women. Two good examples of these women were two of Atatürk’s adopted daughters Afet İnan and Sabiha Gökçen. Afet İnan became a historian and was the head of the first history committee of the Turkish Republic. Sabiha Gökçen, another one of his adopted daughters, was ‘the first military pilot and the world’s first woman combat pilot’. Defined by Atatürk as ‘not a young girl anymore but a young soldier’, Gökçen, as Ayşe Gül Altınyay puts it, became the symbol of the militarized nation. However, the daughters of the new Turkey were doomed to remain young and immature, always in search of the father’s leadership. In the example of Sabiha Gökçen’s memoir, Atatürk’un İziinde Bir Ömür Böyle Geçti (How A Life Passed in the Path of Atatürk, 1982), Hülya Adak defines Gökçen as ‘the eternal daughter’ and points that ‘the adult woman is not visible in the entire text; this gives the reader the impression that, as the daughter of Mustafa Kemal, the narrator never grows out of the infant stage’.

113 Women’s suffragette rights were given to women after Muhiddin’s party was dismantled.
114Ibid, p.228.
115Nandy, p.15.
116Zihnioğlu, p.229.
117Ayşe Gül Altınyay, p.7
118Ibid, p.38.
better than any other source, we find the most explicit definition of the relationship of this ideal new woman of the Turkish republic with the image of Mustafa Kemal as father-leader in the last words of Sabiha Gökçen’s memoir: ‘Only if I think of you, if I understand you, if I love you, if I am in your path, I am’.120

3. Disciplining Populations: Healthy and Sporty Bodies of the Nation

In the transformation to nation-state, individual bodies became representatives of the nation; they were fattened with meaning and biological responsibility. Such a typology not only turned the individual lives of citizens into ‘allegorical lives’ that were dedicated to a bigger cause, primarily the wellbeing of the nation, but also every citizen was defined as part of a bigger body: one big sturdy, strong body that was made up of individual bodies. On the one hand, bodies were mortal due to their biological status; on the other, they were immortal due to their status as the bodies of the citizens of the new Turkish republic. On the 10 May 1933, a new law was enacted making it mandatory for school children to read a poem, ‘Our National Oath’, every morning before entering school.121 The poem ended with a line: ‘May my existence be a present to Turkish existence’. The line functions as an explicit summary of the two bodies of the People: the body natural, and Body politic. The biological body was disposable to guarantee the continuation of the body politic of the People. The emphasis on the mortality of biological bodies and the immortality of the body politic was not only one of the most dominant ideological strategies of the founding government, it was also the very definition of what an ideal citizen was. In a speech in 1937, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk put it as follows:

Unhappy is he who believes that he alone personifies the existence of all humanity. It is evident that man as an individual, is bound to perish. To work not for one’s self, but for those to come is the primary condition of happiness in life. Any reasonable man cannot act otherwise. Full pleasure and happiness in life can only be attained by working for the existence, honour and happiness of the coming generations. 122

Accordingly, care of the body was one of the duties of citizenship and a biological responsibility. Every citizen had a responsibility to protect their health and body for the wellbeing of the coming generations. In an article entitled ‘Türkün Sağlığı, Türkiye’nin Sağlamlığıdır’ (The Health of the Turk is the Robustness of Turkey), Dr Demir Ali wrote

120Quoted in ibid, p.34.
121The enforcement of this law continued until 2012.
that ‘living hygienically and having a robust body is not only a matter concerning an individual’s life, it is, at the same time, and foremost, a social necessity’. Similarly, the head of the Wrestling Federation, Ahmet Fetgeri, penned an article in Türk Spor (Turkish Sports) accusing those who did not participate in sports as guilty of treason.

Harming one’s own body is not a matter concerning the individual’s life but it is also a matter concerning one’s community, race and nation. Young people who don’t do sports and who batter their bodies in decadence should not forget that they are not harming their individual bodies but the body of the nation. Miserable Turkish youth who has fallen into a decadent life! Why do you hate your race and nation so much to waste away the future of coming generations by harming your body like this. If you love your nation and want to save yourself from this calamity, remember that humans are slaves to their habits, and make sports your habit!  

The importance given to sports went hand in hand with the myth of the ancient Turk. In a speech given to athletes in 1926, Atatürk pointed to the natural qualities of the Turkish race, with phrases such as ‘natural hardworking quality’, ‘superior national character’, and ‘natural beauty’. In the same speech he defined sports as a matter of national development, elimination and selection: a means to heal the ‘weak, sick, sickly’ features of Turkish people. Therefore, sports would serve for the betterment of the nation and ‘the sick man would regain his strength to become the superior Turk again’.  

A biology textbook, published in 1934, defined the physical qualities and responsibilities of members of the Turkish race as follows:

The Turkish race of which we are proud to belong has a distinguished place amongst the best, strongest, most intelligent and most competent races in the world. Our duty is to preserve the essential qualities and virtues of the Turkish race and to confirm that we deserve to be members of this race. For that reason, one of our primary national duties is to adhere to the principle of leading physically and spiritually worthwhile lives by protecting ourselves from the perils of ill health, and by applying the knowledge of biology to our lives. The future of our Turkey will depend on the breeding of highly valued Turkish progeny in the families that today’s youth will form in the future.  

Sport was not only crucial for creating fit and healthy generations, but it also functioned in disciplining the masses and turning the civic population into soldiers. This was not a new strategy but rather one that had continued since the Balkan Wars. It

123Quoted in Akın, p.108.  
124Quoted in ibid, p.109.  
125Parla, p.196.  
126Alemdaroğlu, p.137.
appeared in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth-century under the influence of European techniques of physical training. In 1913, Selim Sirri Tarcan praised Freidrich Ludwig Jahn’s Turnen’s Turnvereine (Gymnastic Unions) in the introduction he wrote for the first monograph of Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri (Ottoman Youth Society). Likewise, the Sokol gymnastic organization, which started in Prague and spread through Slavic-populated regions, had influenced Czech and Bulgarian independence movements, and was seen as one of the most effective techniques in the victory of the Bulgarian population against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Wars. It functioned as the template behind the foundation of the first Turkish paramilitary organization, Türk Gücü (Turkish Power). The Committee of Union and Progress was also following Robert Baden-Powell’s scouting movement closely, eventually hiring Harold Parfitt in 1914 to launch the first Scout Association of the Ottoman Empire. In the same year, the war minister of the Second Constitutional Period and the chief scout (başbuğu) Enver Pasha, defined scouting as a ‘useful element that [was] going to prepare the army’.

After the foundation of the republic, the state maintained the same approach towards the function of sports and body discipline. In the fourth congress of the Türkiye İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı (Turkish Training Societies Trust) in 1928, it was stated that sports was a ‘racial issue’ and a ‘business of preparing youth for the army’. Thus, for the republican Turkey too, sports was deemed important as a means to discipline people not only physically, but also mentally, turning the bodies of individuals into the obedient, docile bodies of dutiful and sacrificing citizens. The Body Discipline Law, enacted in 1938, was a product of this strategy. The aim of the law was ‘to regulate gymnastics and sporting activities to promote the development of the citizens’ physical and moral abilities. The law included clauses that would make sports activities mandatory. For instance, the fourth line obliged ‘young people’ to ‘become members of sports clubs’ and continue ‘disciplining their bodies in their leisure times’.
law also allowed People’s Houses to organize sports schemes for adults. The law was not limited to sports clubs, schools or People’s Houses. Factories and offices with more than five hundred workers had to have gyms, sports teachers and pools. The party programme of the CHP explained this law by stating that ‘giving importance to developing bodies as well as minds and raising the character to high levels that our deep national history points to, is the greatest aim’.  

A famous sportsman and a highly influential sports-theorist of both the Ottoman Empire and early Turkish republic, Selim Sırrı Tarcan, supported the idea that sports gave one the discipline of a soldier; it not only firmed one’s body, but one’s character. He was, in particular, an important figure for this official ideology, for he was the head inspector of physical education in the ministry of national education and he formed the national Olympic committee of Turkey. His articles in the journal Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu (Robust Turkish Child) aimed to educate parents about raising their children according to the ideals of the new republic. The Robust Turkish Child magazine was the product of the aim to create a youth that would be shaped in accordance with this ideology.

The same holds true for the body politics of the late Ottoman and early republican period. Physical training and sports functioned in turning civic society into conforming soldiers, moulded in the shape of nationalist and militarist ideals. The Kemalist ideal was to mould all of the population, but also young and reproductive citizens in line with CHP principles. The May 19, National Youth and Sports Day, was another representative of this ideal. In 1935, the May 19 was declared as a national holiday to be celebrated as ‘National Youth and Sports Day.’ The date was chosen specifically as it was the anniversary of the beginning of the War of Independence. As Cevdet Kerim İncedayı wrote in Ülkü, ‘the noble youth of Turkish revolution and republic […] 19th of May has been declared as your holiday, since your future started on that day’. The Sturdy Child Competition of the Çocuk Duygusu (The Feeling of a Child) magazine, or the ‘Turkish Children’ section of La Turquie Kemaliste journals were embodiments of the same ideology.

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135 Ibid.
136 1931 CHP Programme
138 Foucault, Discipline, p.135.
140 Çocuk Duygusu (Child Emotion), 54, (1938), 8-9.
shows young girls doing athletics on a May 19 celebration, figure 8 presents a healthy and robust Turkish child who was represented as the future of the nation in a section entitled as ‘Le visage Turk’ (Turkish face) in La Turquie Kemaliste. A child nation, with the aid of father figure Atatürk, was ready for eternal progression.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have examined the transformation of people into People with the foundation of modern Turkey as a nation-state, and how the discourse that made such a transformation possible presented health as the *sine qua non* condition of being an ideal citizen. With central roles in government as members of parliament, the medical authorities of the period had the power to enact laws and formulate the official stand on the issue of
health and sickness. Medicine, in this process, functioned as a device to constitute knowledge and authority, and an opposition was set between health and illness in regards to the definition of the ideal citizen.

While the body of this ideal Turkish citizen was constructed as young, active, healthy and masculine, the counterpart of it was passive and diseased. Biopower, as one of the main pillars of the modernisation project of Turkey, turned individual bodies into bodies that were doomed to serve the country, forcing people to lead allegorical lives and to ensure that their life choices better served the country. Yet, this definition created its counterpart: the untouchable, unwanted bodies that would ‘damage’ the welfare and hijack the development rather than serving it. Untouchable bodies, then, began where the borders of nation-states were threatened.

As we will see in the following chapters, such ideology provided works of literature with what Raymond Williams defines as ‘structures of feeling’: while the discursive construction of unhealthiness pointed to citizens who were excluded from the ideal image of a social community, the tangible existence of corporeality undermined and contested the image of the ideal body. Literary works functioned as spaces where two bodies of people existed at the same time, deconstructing a unified understanding. In the following chapters, I will discuss how literary works responded, reflected, fed or contested the formulation of the ideal citizen who held a biological debt to the welfare of the nation.
Chapter 2
The Formation of the ‘Ideal’ Woman in the Canonized Works of Halide Edib Adıvar

The position of women in society became a point of discussion vis a vis the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic and was embedded in the progressive and modernizing ideology as part of social transformation.¹ Novels that were conceived and written after the Tanzimat period had as one of the main themes the woman question: women’s bodies became spaces where ideologies of Western progression-Eastern order, secularization-traditional Islam, positivist thought-Islamic values clashed. In the early Turkish novels, the ‘ideal woman’ took an ‘enlightened, “modernist” Islamic position’.² But, with the foundation of the republic, the definition of the ideal woman was integrated into nationalist ideals, rather than Islamic ones.³ Regardless of the change in discourse, however, ‘there [was] one persistent concern which unite[d] the nationalist and Islamic discourses on women: an eagerness to establish that the behaviour and position of women, however defined, [was] congruent with the “true” identity of the collectivity and constituted no threat to it’.⁴

This chapter looks at how the nationalist struggle between the old Islamic order and Western progression, religion and secularization is produced in women’s bodies, marking them as spaces of conflict on a textual level in Halide Edib Adıvar’s novels. Halide Edib started her writing career during the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire. She also played an active role in the Independence War and in the founding of the Republic. Her œuvre explored, developed and worked to bridge subjects such as modernization, Westernization, nationalism and body. As Ayşe Saraçgil notes in her Bukalemun Erkek (Chameleon Man) in which she discusses the role of patriarchy and masculinity in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish republic, ‘[Halide Edib] not only focuses on the application and the results of modernization, but she also actively contributes to the making of the identities of ideal man and ideal woman of a modern and national culture’.⁵

The historical continuity that has been rejected by the ideologists of the Turkish Republic, nevertheless, becomes visible in Halide Edib’s works; her fiction opens a space where the

³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ayşe Saracgil, Bukalemun Erkek: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Ateşkil Yapılar ve Modern Edebiyat (Chameleon Man: Patriarchal Structures and Modern Literature in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), p. 188.
gradual transformation in images regarding bodies, health and illness since the late Ottoman Empire to the early Republican period, can be followed. This chapter discusses in detail the construction of the trope of the invalid in two of Adıvar’s novels, *Handan* (1912) and *Mev’ut Hüküm* (The Promised Verdict, 1917). Two other novels, *Ateşten Gömlek* (published in English as *The Shirt of Flame* and as *The Daughter of Smyrna: A Story of the Rise of Modern Turkey, on the Ashes of the Ottoman Empire--the Turk’s Revolt Against Western Domination, His Thrilling Adventures, Sufferings and Sacrifices in the Cause of National Honour and Independence*, 1923) and *Tatarcık* (1939) in which the construction of the ‘ideal’ woman as a nationalist-militarist body and as the healthy daughter of the republic, respectively, work as useful counterpoints to *Handan* and *Mev’ut Hüküm*.

In all of the texts, the socio-political events of the timeline of the plots play dominant roles in the characterizations as well as in the plots themselves. For instance, *Handan* presents a picture of the Westernization movement of the empire, and the effects of this on the main protagonist, Handan, whose character is greatly determined by her search for identity in-between the definitions of new ideal woman of the Young Turk regime and the unspoken desires of women. Written with the propagandist purpose of portraying the ‘Greek atrocities’ during World War 1, the novels – *Ateşten Gömlek* and *Vurun Kahpeye* (Trash the Whore, 1923) – and short story collections – *Dağa Çıkan Kurt* (Wolf on the Mountain, 1922) and *İzmir’den Bursa’ya* (From İzmir to Bursa, 1922) are ‘national romances’ that serve as “foundational myths” of the Turkish Republic. Accordingly in *Ateşten Gömlek*, the sacrificial and brave Ayesha becomes the embodiment of Smyrna which is seized by the Greek army. The heroes who are in love with her therefore have to take Smyrna (the modern day İzmir) first, to win Ayesha’s heart. The portrayal of heroines as the embodiments of the Turkish nation continue to exist in her novels written after the foundation of the republic. In *Tatarcık*, the heroine, Lale, is the healthy and young new woman. She is identified as truly modernized, but hers is not a modernization that requires her to be passive – she is explicitly portrayed as a strong swimmer. She declares her aim to ‘civilize’ the villagers.

In this chapter, Halide Edib Adıvar’s works are considered as the canonized key texts of Turkish language literature with the central role they played in depicting the ‘ideal’ combination of Western and Eastern values. To this day, her ‘national romances’ *Ateşten Gömlek* and *Vurun Kahpeye* retain their place in the national secondary school and

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universities curriculum and appear in lists of ‘100 Temel Eser’ (100 Fundamental Works), prepared by the Ministry of Education. In her article entitled ‘Canon, Extra-Canon, Anti-Canon: On Literature as a Medium of Cultural Memory’ Börte Sagaster writes on the debate that followed this list in 2004:

Works that were written in this period by authors like Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Halide Edib Adıvar, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, and Refik Halid Karay – all represented with one more than one book in the list – functioned in making [monolingual Western oriented Kemalist] discourse work and have ever since been important mediators of Kemalist ideas in Turkey and remain on required reading lists in schools and universities.8

This chapter, therefore, looks at the centre of the canon to investigate the heteronormative portrayal of health and sickness through Halide Edib Adıvar’s works. Her works here are approached as both revolutionary (in the sense that she defines herself and the movement to which she feels she belongs as one that seeks ‘revolution in everyday life’ as Paul Ginsborg puts it)9 and docile (in the sense that her works confirm normative gender definitions by producing ‘regulatory ideals’).10 On the one hand, this places her works in the social realist novel tradition in which, as put by Georg Lukács on European realism, ‘...the relationship between the individual and the social setting of which it is the product and in which – or against which – it acts, is always clearly discernible, however intricate this relationship may be’,11 In the case of Turkish literary works, this writing tradition was functional in portraying individuals in the broader picture of society, and helped writers develop narratives of nation-building. As Erdağ Göknar notes, for writers of the late Ottoman and early Republican periods such as Halide Edib Adıvar or Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, ‘historiography – in particular the construction of national or social history – was of paramount literary concern,’ and that ‘these authors wrote under the assumption that, in an era of cultural revolution, literary narratives emerged from historical contexts represented through realism’.12 Halide Edib explicitly and intentionally puts her novels at work to express her political stand on the modernization of the empire and the

8Börte Sagaster, ‘Canon, Extra-Canon, Anti-Canon: On Literature as a Medium of Cultural Memory’ in Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory: ‘Multiculturalism’ as a Literary Theme after 1980, ed. by Catharina Dufft (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), pp.63-78 (p.64).
birth of the nation as a new republic. It is, however, important to note that Halide Edib
does not altogether follow a consistent line in her works but rather her understanding of
materialism, naturalism and social realism are often combined, or at times replaced, with a
romantic nationalism, spiritualism or individualism. Here, I attempt to scrutinize her use of
bodies, especially sick bodies, in a line of transformation of her heroines from sick and
passive victims to healthy ‘daughters of the republic.’\textsuperscript{13} However, even her most social
Darwinist work, \textit{Mev’ut Hüküm} becomes a space for the discord between science and
spiritualism which, as I shall argue below, turns the text into a hybrid one where naturalism
and tragedy meet.

The chapter also looks closely at the role that health politics plays in the
transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the modern Turkish republic, since Halide
Edib’s central place in the Young Turks regime as well as in the independence movement
and republican Turkey allows her texts to serve as vehicles that reflect debates on dominant
ideologies of these periods. In \textit{Handan} the tension between the East-West dichotomy
marks the female body with the loss of her identity. Witty and well-educated Handan is left
by her husband and gradually loses her resistant spirit by becoming an invalid. When she
becomes docile through illness, she is finally loved and cherished by another man. In
\textit{Mev’ut Hüküm} once again we encounter the trope of invalidism, this time with a heroine,
Sara, who suffers from a venereal disease as well as ‘bad genes.’ The discourse on the
deterministic progression of society is both affirmed and undermined as the novel is
transformed from a naturalist text to an altered adaptation of \textit{Othello}. Sara does not die of
her illness but rather is killed by her doctor-husband who falsely believes that she is having
an affair. Despite her poor hereditary qualities and venereal disease, Sara still manages to
rise above the ‘filth’ with all her ‘gracefulness’ intact.\textsuperscript{14} Her husband, however, despite all
his normative social stance as a doctor whose mission becomes the healing the society,
cannot manage to rise from the ‘filth’ in his soul and kills his wife.

Both \textit{Handan} and \textit{Mev’ut Hüküm} create the image of an ‘ideal’ woman both in the
sense that these women become the bearers of the true ideals of the nation and are
portrayed as materialized souls. The ‘soul’ whose pain makes Handan an invalid or whose
purity makes Sara rise above the filth, ‘becomes a normative and normalizing ideal’ in
producing women as docile bodies.\textsuperscript{15} The narratives produce them in accordance with
heteronormative male desire and, as I shall argue below, Aivar’s ‘ideal’ woman works as a

\textsuperscript{13}The term is put by Kandiyoti in ‘Women As Metaphor’, p.149.
\textsuperscript{15}Butler, \textit{Bodies That Matter}, p.9.
‘regulatory ideal’ through the tropes of health and sickness.

1. Self as the Embodiment of Nation

Halide Edib’s works are often defined as one of the pillars of Turkish language literature. From the beginning of her writing career she identified herself with broader political movements and even her most ‘autobiographical’ novels portray the private relationships of her characters as war zones where various ideologies clash. This is not altogether surprising, since she not only points to the Young Turk revolution of 1908 as integral to her writerly self, but also narrates the gaining/formation of her subjectivity in connection to/as a result of the broader socio-political changes in the Ottoman Empire. On 1908 when the Young Turks took over the Sublime Porte and declared a new era of constitution, later known as the Second Constitutional Era, Halide Edib notes that: ‘In the general enthusiasm and rebirth I became a writer’. Simultaneously this was also the beginning of her career as a journalist as well as a public speaker. She started writing columns for the Commitee of Union and Progress newspaper Tanin (The Voice) about literature, women’s emancipation, domestic problems and nationalism. She received various letters from her readers, asking for advice or treating her as a confidante. The letters, which she carefully burnt after writing back to maintain her readers’ anonymity, led her to have a broader sense of the burdens and obstacles in women’s lives, created by the ‘old order’, regardless of their class or age. Her political activism gained pace in support of the Young Turks, especially on the issue of the emancipation of women. In addition to publishing in various other journals, such as Aşıyan, Resimli Kitap (The Book with Illustrations), Demet (Bouquet) and Musavver Muhit (The Illustrated Millieu) she co-founded Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti (Society for the Development of Women), a society that went on to educate women in English, French and Turkish as well as child rearing and

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17 Halide Edib, Memoirs, p.260.

18A political society which was first founded in 1889 by the students of the Military Medical School who were followers of biological materialism with the influence of medical school professor Sakir Pasha who was a student of Claude Bernard. While the first aim of the group was to spread their ideas through newspapers and pamphlets, later one part of the group sided with the Young Turks and evolved into a political party. Following the Young Turks revolution in 1908 which forced the Sultan to restore the constitution, CUP was elected as the ruling party. Şerif Mardin, Türk Modernleşmesi (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), pp. 97-100.


20Ibid, p.270.
domestic knowledge.  

For the Young Ottomans, the condition of women was approached as a social problem to be solved as part of the journey to modernity. Deniz Kandiyoti notes that, ‘From the ‘Tanzimat’ period onwards, we see a significant increase in attacks on the traditional Ottoman family system and the position of women within it to such an extent that these constitute privileged themes of the first Turkish novels, which are themselves a post-Tanzimat phenomenon’. A prominent ideologist behind the Young Turk movement, Ziya Gökalp was one of the most effective names in engineering the approach towards women’s emancipation which later on evolved into the nationalist feminism of the Kemalist ideology. The main line of Gökalp’s nationalism was his differentiation between culture and civilization. According to Gökalp, while civilization is international and represents ‘the sum total of social phenomena that have occurred by conscious action and individual wills’ such as sciences and ‘knowledge and theories relating to ethics, law, fine arts, economics, philosophy, language and technologies’, culture is not artificial, it has not been created by individuals and nations cannot imitate each others’ cultures: ‘culture consists essentially of emotions and civilization of knowledge’. Therefore he supported the possibility and necessity that the new Turkish nation could both progress through civilization and protect its unique culture whose characteristics exceeded the history of interaction between the Turkish race and Islam and could be found purely in pre-Islamic Turkish communities. His formulation of feminism stemmed from this division between culture and civilization. In The Principles of Turkism, which consisted of his opinions/theories on the characteristics of the Turkish nation and history that became the main ideological foundation behind Mustafa Kemal’s nationalist and progressivist discourse, Gökalp notes that ‘The ancient Turks were not only the world’s most democratic ethnic group but also its most feminist’. According to him, however, this quality was shadowed by the influence of Persian and Greek civilizations, making women secondary members of society. According to Gökalp, the simultaneous birth of Turkish nationalism and the emergence of the demands over women’s emancipation was not a coincidence,

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21 Adak, ‘An Epic for Peace’, p.viii
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid, p. 104.
since ‘not only […] this century esteems these two ideals but also because democracy and feminism were the two principal bases of ancient Turkish life.’ Gökalp’s narration of the history of the ancient Turks finds the causes of such equality between sexes in the shamanism of the Turks:

Turkish shamanism was based on the sacred power believed to reside in women. In order to be able to perform miracles by their magical powers, Turkish shamans had to disguise themselves as women. They would wear women’s clothes, let their hair grow, refine their voices, shave their moustaches and beards, and even get pregnant and bear children.  

As K. E. Fleming suggests, Gökalp’s formulation on the true qualities of Turkishness residing in its ancient Shaman culture also genders these so called qualities. By crediting the rediscovery of women’s value to the 19th century Ottoman Empire he set women up as the ‘guarantors and protectors of the past’ since they ‘ha[d] possession of - and the ability to transmit – the true forms of Turkey’s civilization’. Women became synonymous with a progressive idea of civilization (a quality not adopted from the West but inherent to ancient Turks) and men, as the bearers of culture, needed to rediscover and control it. 

Halide Edib was one of the most committed followers of Gökalp’s Turkist ideas and she too saw equality between the sexes as something ‘endemic to the Turkish national character and that characterized the social life of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Turkish societies’. Even though her novel, Yeni Turan (New Turan), was her utopian manifesto novel where she explicitly narrated the principles of Turkism through her characters, throughout her writing career the influence of Ziya Gökalp’s thoughts were echoed in many of her other novels. These often followed a common pattern where male protagonists criticise, despise or look down on the female protagonists and then grow to love the women as they get to know them better. In Handan, Refik Cemal first reveals his prejudice by describing Handan as a woman who is too smart for her own good and who is a match to any man in her knowledge in sciences, arts and literature. His prejudice against such ‘Westernized’ and accomplished women can be read as the prejudice of the period towards women who rejected the demands of the ‘old order’. Similarly in The Shirt of Flame, the narrator Peyami first hears about Ayesha when his mother proposes an arranged marriage.

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29 Ibid, pp.111-112.
31 Ibid, p.130
Upon this suggestion he reacts as follows:

Twelve years ago my mother wanted me to marry [Ayesha] and invited her to Istamboul. O God! A girl from Smyrna and named Ayesha! I packed up as quickly as possible and ran away to Europe.  

Peyami’s rejection of Ayesha is presented as the prejudice of the Istanbul middle class elite’s prejudice toward ‘the traditional Turkish woman’; however the plot proceeds to illuminate Ayesha’s numerous qualities by portraying her as a patriotic, high-cultured, sacrificial, witty and brave woman. As Ayesha’s qualities are described as the true qualities of Turkey, Peyami cannot help but fall in love with her and devote himself to the emancipation of the nation as a result of his love.

These heroines, who at times give their names to the titles of the books, Handan, Seviyye Talip or Tatarcık, are often portrayed as superior to all the other women or men around them. Their wit, courage or dedication is highlighted and we see them become the true subjects of the novels. The ‘discovery’ of the value of these women is an important journey for the heroes, which stems from a remembrance of what they have been looking for, since it was, all along, right before their very own eyes. This is therefore not a new route but a homecoming: it is not adventurous but a safe return home, finding (or supplementing) something that they had lost long ago. Through their ‘ideal’ existence, these women teach men around them how to be as ‘ideal’ as themselves if they want to unite with them. In Halide Edib’s texts the heroines function as a mirror that show the heroes an ideal image of a man as a member of the nation and teach them how to formulate their subjectivity as such.

According to Slavoj Žižek, nation, is a ‘Thing’ that does not refer to a reality other than itself, and is a fantasy that is enjoyed in its own self-referential constitution. It is not definable, since it does not have a reality other than itself, and yet it creates the illusion of a shared experience, hence the Thing. It is therefore an object of fantasy that can never be obtained and is ‘elevated through fantasy to the ideal status of the point de capiton’. Nation, thus, is a master-signifier whose meaning is imaginary. It is not however only imaginary, but also regulatory. Nation works as cappitonce, as ‘the operation by means of which we identify/construct a sole agency that “pulls the strings” behind a multitude of...”

By symbolising the true qualities of the nation, Halide Edib’s heroines function as the capptitona that create an ego ideal as the subjects of the national Law for the heroes. If the heroes want to unite with the heroines, they have to aim to become this ideal.

If desiring these heroines turns heroes into subjects of the Law of the nation, then these heroes’ desire for the heroines is also the desire to have the phallus. And if these heroines represent the true qualities of the nation and if men’s realisation of their value is a precondition of unifying with them as well as being ideal members of the nation, then nation has the structure of desire, for it, like language, is made up of signifiers, striving to return to what once existed and is now lost. In other words, the nation will be built ‘through [the heroes’] shared orientation toward [the ideal woman]’.

Desire, therefore, plays a crucial role in the plots of these texts. Halide Edib sets two types of desires at the opposite ends of the spectrum; one that is bodily desire or the call of the flesh, and the other that is high desire or intellectual idealism. The characters who fall for the call of the flesh do not reach their end-goal and are punished by death, illness, madness and poverty. However, the ones who manage to leave their bodily desires behind to aim for a higher desire such as the national will for independence, are rewarded accordingly. From Handan to Tatarcık, women protagonists can be observed transforming their desires from the materialistic to the ideal. While Handan and Sara are depicted as desirous women and are punished in accordance with their desires, Zeynep of Kalp Ağrısı or Tatarcık of the novel with the same title, tame their desire for the flesh and find their happy ending. They are, in other words, saved only when they leave their flesh behind. As Hülya Adak notes, this approach is also in line with Halide Edib’s memoir in which corporeal experiences are only narrated in relation to her childhood years. In her adult years, on the other hand, body becomes an object of discussion only when she acknowledges its existence through her desire to leave it behind: ‘but how Halide, the Halide not of flesh and blood, was going to turn her back on the physical Halide and interrupt the contact’. Her desire to leave her corporeal existence behind is succeeded later when her personal misery is placed in relation to the misery of community: ‘I had by

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now mastered the flesh – I was not even conscious of its misery more than I was conscious of the obvious misery of the other people around me’. 40

Male protagonists, on the other hand, only reach their happy ending through desiring the ideal woman. The test they have to take requires them to unite their souls with the women’s souls, not with their body. In *Mev’ut Hüküm*, it is when Sara finds a higher cause and starts nursing war patients in the dispensary that she manages to pass this test. However, Kasım Şinasi fails due to his sexual desire for Sara. As noted by Hülya Adak, ‘The union of the female protagonist with the male narrator never materializes: the desire of the male narrator for the female protagonist is deferred and unfulfilled because of external/social barriers.’ 41 The union only takes place when men recognize the ideals of women as in the case in Edib’s later novels. For example, in *The Shirt of Flame* it is only when Peyami unites Ayesha and Ihsan’s hands as they lie dead side by side or in *Tatarcık* when Recep recognizes the ‘real’ beauty of new Turkish women in Lale’s ideals that we see ‘successful’ unions.

Women, therefore, are portrayed as the symbols of regulatory ideals. Men who fall victim to their materialist desires and hence who fail to match such idealistic images meet their doomed end; men who recognize and adopt/share these ideals, however, are rewarded with happy endings either in death or in life. Such a dichotomy between idealism and materialism also finds its expression in Halide Edib’s memoir in which she accuses the latter for being responsible for the misery of people. She notes:

> My own conclusion is to teach to all the coming generations the love of our kind, the constant struggle for a higher state of national morality, a better adjustment and greater equality among all peoples; these are the only fundamental conditions which can make life possible and lasting on the globe. It was the selfish and materialistic philosophy of the latter part of the nineteenth century which brought the greatest of human disasters in the form of the World War. 42

Her falling out with Committee of Union and Progress, Ziya Gökalp 43 and eventually

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43 This is not altogether surprising. Her close relations with the Committee of Union and Progress began to suffer after 1913, reaching a peak with the 1915 Armenian massacre which, she publicly criticized in a Turkish Hearts meeting in 1916. Her disappointment led to a silence in her career as a writer which she explored in her memoir, noting that ‘[her] writing life had lost its importance’ and that ‘[she] could not write even a line.’ She left for Syria, becoming a teacher and an inspector in orphanages. As Hülya Adak suggests in *Halide Edib ve Siyasal Şiddet*, this might have been caused by her need to leave Istanbul after criticisms from various members of the Committee of Union and Progress on her critical speech in the Turkish Hearts meeting. After a year’s silence, her novel that she dedicated to the soul of Zola, *Mev’ut Hüküm* would be produced which as I will argue, reflects her disappointment on human nature as well as her doubts about determinism through a combination of naturalism and tragedy. See, Hülya Adak, *Halide Edib ve Siyasal Şiddet: Ermeni Kırımı, Diktatörlük ve Şiddetsizlik* (Halide Edib and Political Violence: Armenian Genocide,
Mustafa Kemal Ataturk are all explained within the lines of the dichotomy of higher ideals and selfish materialism.

As I think of [Ziya Gökalp] now, sitting under the green shade of my lamp, smiling mildly and indulgently at the sharp and rather sarcastic remarks of Youssouf Akchoura, dreaming of a better state in religion, in literature, in moral beauty, for a better state for Turkish women and children, I can hardly believe that he tolerated and even developed the materialistic philosophy of the Union and Progress during the last years of the World War.

In spite of his opposition to hero worship which he expressed in a line, ‘No individual, but society,’ he yet wrote epics to the military and civil leaders of the Union and Progress, and in later years to those of the Nationalists. These epics are quoted as among his inconsistencies.  

According to Halide Edib the high ideals require one to dedicate one’s life to the collective which she sees as the only way to reach to the truth. ‘Selfish’ and individualistic materialism on the other hand shadows the truth. Her admiration for Emile Zola, accordingly, stems from her regarding Zola as an ‘idealist’ fighter of truth against the lower desires: ‘Zola’s soul sensed an invisible oppression created by the lower powers which dominate man and make him eager to suppress truth’. However, this depiction reveals the difference between Zola’s and Halide Edib’s understanding of ‘idealism.’ According to Zola, the ‘search for truth’ is what separates an idealist from an experimentalist. He offers determinism as the true revealer of the falsities of an idealist whose morality ‘lives in the clouds far above the facts’. Even though Halide Edib attacks fleshly desire and worldly satisfaction as much as Zola, she differs from Zola by placing the idea of a soul against worldly materialism. The word ‘soul’ is repeated throughout her notes on Zola, which she places in opposition to selfish, materialist and ‘worldly’ desires. For her, ‘the higher truth’ is not a determinist but a spiritual one and one can reach it only by devoting oneself to the well-being of one’s people. Halide Edib’s hatred towards ‘great men’ and their false ideals was brought about by her hatred towards individualist desires of such ‘great men’. For her, Mustafa Kemal belonged to such a group who ‘always considered every Turkish subject to have been brought into the world specially to serve his purpose: each was a member of the collective mass of Turkish humanity which he meant to possess and command.’ In the following lines in her memoir, Halide Edib defines her disillusionment with Mustafa Kemal, as the main reason for writing her memoirs: to leave behind an account of the

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44 Halide Edib, Memoirs, p.319.
47 Adıvar, Turkish Ordeal, p.131.
Turkish people’s struggle and fight for freedom. By doing so she sees her self as the embodiment of collectivity. This is more explicitly expressed in her description of when she spoke in front of the masses in 1919 in Sultanahmet Square, Istanbul on the Greek invasion of İzmir.

Each gaze sent its message, and I was intensely conscious that at that moment I was identified with my country. […] Here she was, Turkey in black, her cheeks pale, her eyes sorrowful, her shoulders bent. Yet she was stronger than the victors and their force and joy. She had the internal force of her martyred race and their sublime faith in their rights.

In the lines above, she not only defines herself as ‘Turkey’, but she also sets up an ideal image through such identification, one that is ‘stronger than the victors’. From Handan to her Tatarcık, from sickly romantic heroine to the healthy daughter of republic, these characters become healthier and happier as they leave their bodily desires behind and replace them with high ideals of the national will. Such approach is also echoed by Ziya Gökalp, defined as her mentor by Halide Edib. In his article entitled ‘Mefkurenin Harikalari’ (The Wonders of Ideals), he writes “if [a] man possesses a high ideal, he can free himself from insanity’ and suggests that the numbers of people suffering from insanity increases ‘during times of lack of ideals’. In other words, their narcissistic illnesses are only healed when individualism is replaced by collectivism. The nation consists of and creates healthy, happy and young members.

Such an image of the ‘idealized woman’, however, functions as a regulatory heteronormative creation. One of my major cornerstones here is Judith Butler’s reading of Freud and Lacan in Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’. In ‘On Narcissism: An Introduction’ Sigmund Freud builds his arguments concerning the formation of the libido on the experience of bodily pain and suggests that the concentration on one’s pain can be a type of ‘narcissistic withdrawal of the positions of the libido on the subject’s own self.’ In his The Ego and the Id, he then regards pain as ‘the pre-condition of bodily self-discovery’. On this, Butler argues that ‘although Freud’s language engages a causal temporality that has the body part precede its “idea”’, the corporeal body and the

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48 For a detailed comparison between Halide Edib’s and Musta Kemal Ataturk’s accounts of the national independence movement, see. Hülya Adak, ‘ National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal’ The South Atlantic Quarterly, 102 (2003), 509-527
49Adıvar, Turkish Ordeal, p.18.
52Butler, Bodies That Matter, p.23.
imagining of the body cannot be thought of separately, as the knowable body and corporeal body cannot exist without one another: ‘...it would not be possible to speak about a body part that precedes and gives rise to an idea, for it is the idea that emerges simultaneously with the phenomenologically accessible body, indeed, that guarantees its accessibility’.54 Freud then points to the function of bodily parts in pain as ‘the erotogenic zones – [which] may act as substitutes for the genitals and behave analogously to them’.55 ‘The ‘transferability’ of the genitals, particularly the penis, turns the physical matter into an idea, i.e. phallus. As Butler notes, ‘phallus belongs to no body part, but is fundamentally transferable’.56 The body finally finds its integrity in what Lacan formulates as the mirror stage in which through mirroring another image, the body is idealized as whole. This is, however, not an act of realizing an already-existing body. Butler argues that with the mirror stage coinciding with the entry into symbolic realm through language, the body becomes phenomenologically accessible. Once again, therefore, it is not possible to argue a material body preceding discourse or a discourse preceding a material body as one creates another: ‘the body in the mirror does not represent a body that is, as it were, before the mirror: the mirror, even as it is instigated by that unrepresentable body ‘before’ the mirror, produces that body as its delirious effect – a delirium, by the way which we are compelled to live’.57 Thus inseparability between the two functions as regulative as well as normative.

The regulative and normative formation of the body functions as a device for nation-building in Halide Edib’s corpus. Considering Edib forms her writerly self as a historicised subject both in her memoir (in which she decides to write her own account of the nation-building) as well as in her fiction (in which she creates characters who are formed in relation to their socio-political environments), her ideal women function as the object of desire for men who will finally obtain them by thoroughly internalizing the Law of the nation if the union is to take place. But such regulatory demand does not only concern men. Women, too, form their subjectivities as the members of the nation as they leave their material bodies behind. Handan and Sara’s narcissistic preoccupation with their bodies is replaced by the idealization of Ayesha of The Shirt of Fire until the point when she completely becomes imaginary. Only when they truly internalize the ideology of the new republic, as in the case of Lale of Tatarcık, do they then form a union of the body and the idea as the healthy daughter of republic.

54Ibid, 30. 
56Butler, Bodies That Matter, p.32. 
57Ibid, p. 57.
2. Handan’s Body as the Threshold of Ottoman Nationalism

*Handan* was published in 1912 at the heyday of the Young Turk revolution. Halide Edib was then a thorough follower of and participant in the movement, and defined as ‘the mother of the Turk’ by the members of Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland), a Turkist literary and culture club. However, ironically, her novel *Handan* pointed to the failures of national idealism on the subject of women. An epistolary novel, *Handan* tells the story of a girl who unlike most girls of the time, receives a high standard of education, but is stuck between the image of the ideal girl as defined by the Young Turks’ ideology and her own desires. The epistolary form of the novel allows Halide Edib to portray Handan herself as narrative, described and discussed by various people around her in their letters. Such narrative, however, fails to portray Handan as an individual as every letter that discusses her aligns her with the definition of the ideal woman as prompted by the Young Turk ideology or points to those traits that do not conform to such definitions. Handan, in other words, turns into the threshold of Young Turk modernization with her failure to fulfil the role of the ideal woman in a period, as Füsun Üstel defines in her *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde* (In Search of Ideal Citizen), ‘that had an awareness of the importance of women as the biological producers as well as the main actors and cultural transporters in the ideological reproduction of the national community’.

The novel begins with Refik Cemal’s letter to his friend Server which announces his marriage to ‘one of the alafranga girls’ of a well-known family. Since the very first moment that he is welcomed into the family, he begins to hear of Handan as a mysterious but highly worshipped girl. His new wife Neriman mentions this step-cousin, Handan any chance she gets. She fills her bedroom with Handan’s photos and asks Handan’s opinion on various matters ranging from what she thinks of Refik Cemal to what she should wear on her wedding day. Neriman and other family members describe Handan to Refik Cemal as intelligent and wise. When Refik Cemal asks Neriman what Handan looks like, the following conversation takes place:

- What about her beauty?
- I don’t know about that!
- Isn’t there a photo of her?
- She doesn’t look like herself.
- Describe.
- Let me think: She has strange hair with patches of red, dark and light colour. She dresses

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her hair beautifully. She has eyes that are the same colour as her hair.

- Other parts of her face?
- On Handan’s face, one only sees her eyes and hair, one cannot even look anywhere else.⁶⁰

While her eyes and her hair are two parts in her physical appearance that point to her character, the rest of her body seem invisible to others’ eyes. At his first dinner with Neriman’s family, Refik Cemal notices that a chair is always left empty at the table for Handan. When Refik Cemal sees that Neriman puts up various photos of Handan in their bedroom, he feels like Handan is watching them. Handan seems to haunt her social circle even when she is not physically present: she appears as a soul or a spirit who always watches, judges, leads.

Moran suggests that Halide Edib repeats this heroic female protagonist in many of her texts such as Raik ‘in Annesi, Seviyye Talip, Son Eseri, Yeni Turan, Ateşten Gömlek, Vurun Kahpeye and Handan. These protagonists all represent Halide Edib’s definition of the ideal woman in the Second Constitutional period: women who ‘had strong personalities above all, defended their rights, were educated in the Western style by fully grasping the philosophical dynamics of Western culture, talented in an art form like painting or music, knew a foreign language, were high cultured and attractive’.⁶¹ According to İnci Enginün, throughout the novel, the narrative presents the image of an ‘ideal woman’ from every angle and through every social relation.⁶² Refik Cemal and Server, as the outsiders to her social circle, regard Handan as a woman with pride and confidence, characteristics that are unexpected of a woman of her age. When Refik Cemal finally meets her in Paris where he flees to escape the risk of imprisonment, the two introduce each other at the top of a church. Handan shakes Refik Cemal’s hand ‘like a man’, an action that Refik Cemal finds unsuitable for a twenty-three-year-old-woman.⁶³

Handan has such self-confidence, she has a responsibility for herself that should not exist in a woman of her age that, this condition in a woman both gives me the feeling of rebellion and pity. Women should always be fragile, always under the protection of men, right Neriman?⁶⁴

Neriman, on the other hand, is narrated as the opposite of Handan. In this early novel, we encounter the trope of dark haired/blonde girl dichotomy which is used in Halide

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⁶³Halide Edib, Handan, p.38.
⁶⁴Ibid. 40.
Edib’s future novels *Kalb Ağrısı* (Heart Ache) and *Mev’ut Hüküm* among others. Here blonde, beautiful, naïve, less intelligent Neriman stands as Handan’s opposite. Accordingly, while Neriman is co-dependant; dark haired, not so beautiful, but sophisticated Handan is an independent and striking character with high self-esteem, a characteristic that intimidates almost all of the male characters of the story, except Nazım who treats her as a comrade. Similarly, Handan’s father’s friends are happy to have Handan as a companion with whom they can share their philosophical recollections. Despite all of his prejudice, Refik Cemal, too, grows to love her. As the novel proceeds, Refik Cemal grows bored of Neriman and claims they share no common ground. However, when he meets Handan, he is surprised by how time passes as they discuss politics, arts and literature. In the evening he spends with Handan and Handan’s husband, his initial first impression about her changes. However, when he notices that as Handan talks to her, she simultaneously plays with her husband’s lips, he is suprised by her double character; on the one hand she is a woman of high intellectual capacity, on the other hand she shows no respect to the moral boundaries by being highly physical with her husband in public. He leaves their flat at once and condemns Handan and her husband’s open sexuality. He is later surprised by Handan’s bold cleavage. When Refik Cemal finds Handan’s behaviour too fickle, he explains the issue thus: ‘civilized women, obviously, change their behaviours as they change their dresses’. As Seher Özkök notes, Handan does not strictly fit the definitions of an ideal woman as defined by Young Turks, since she does not reject her bodily existence and does not hide her desires. By revealing the tension between conservative traditions and Westernization, *Handan* therefore also critiques the ideals of the Commitee of Union and Progress government by revealing that when it comes to women’s sexuality, the ‘progressive’ and Westernized government is just as conservative as the old order.

Handan’s first love affair can be read as an example of her rejection of the ideals of the CUP movement. Nazım who is known as a revolutionary and a socialist, starts tutoring Handan. He is so impressed by Handan’s intelligence that he eventually refuses payment for these lessons and begins teaching Handan as a service to the country. Their hours of discussions every week create an emotional bond between the two, leading Nazım to propose to Handan.

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I want to marry you Handan Hanım. [...] This will not be like any other marriage. Its conditions are not of those any girl would want. [...] As you know I am a socialist, a revolutionist, a person whose life is not clear. There is even always a possibility of me bombing somewhere tomorrow, getting arrested the day after. [...] There will be maybe big things in the country one day, maybe we will be the ones who are doing these big things. Maybe there will be fire, blood, smoke and death, lots of death in our future. You [...] Would you be one of the ones who are creating this fire, blood, smoke and death?\(^67\)

But Handan is not convinced by the intimacy of this proposal. She writes to Neriman, commenting on the incident as follows:

But do you recognise it Neri? There was something missing in this proposal: He was marrying me with his cause, not himself! Not one nice word, or look of affection! [...] He did not seem to see me. [...] As you see dear Neriman, he left with his big blue eyes directed to his cause, rather than at me. Now I have a thing in me that is big but lacks humanity. [...] Neriman, Neriman, I wish he hadn’t left; I wish he, I don’t know, had warmed my soul with his gaze, held my hands inside his, not as machines that would enliven his cause but as Handan’s poor helpless womanly hands.\(^68\)

A month later, Handan decides to marry a middle-aged, strong, aggressive womaniser, Hüsnü Pasha, who makes Handan feel like ‘girls who turn lions into cats as soon as the step into their cages’.\(^69\) Unlike her relationship with Nazım, Handan’s relationship with Hüsnü Pasha is predominantly a sexual one. Yet, her happiness with Hüsnü Pasha is overshadowed when she is out with Neriman to buy new sheets for her marriage bed and instead witnesses Nazım’s funeral. She learns from his letters that he hung himself in prison, unable to cope with her rejection. This suicide leaves a permanent mark on Handan, making her nerves weak. Finally, Hüsnü Pasha takes Handan to Europe to recover. However, her marriage with Hüsnü Pasha does not bring her any happiness. Unlike Nazım, Hüsnü Pasha desires Handan’s body, and what existed between Handan and Nazım, namely a union of the minds, does not exist in Handan’s relationship with Hüsnü Pasha. The two start having arguments, witnessed by their social circles. Finally Hüsnü Pasha’s sexual desires lead him to having affairs with various women. Handan’s mental state becomes more and more fragile with every new affair.

Yakup Kadri notes that even though Handan ends up being an ‘ideal woman’ through her education, passionate soul and desirous body, men around her fail at satisfying these three parts of her being.\(^70\) Nazım, although satisfying her intellect, fails at making her

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\(^68\) Ibid. 80-82.
\(^69\) Ibid. 84.
feel physically desired. Hüsnü Pasha on the other hand ignores her soul and only treats her as a sexual object. In other words, throughout the novel Handan’s three affairs fail at being ‘ideal’ as Handan herself. Refik Cemal’s growing interest in Handan later on becomes the third type of relationship that fails to satisfy Handan fully. The two satisfy each other’s mental and spiritual needs and yet socially such a relationship is unacceptable since Refik Cemal is Neriman’s husband.

Halide Edib makes a strict distinction between Handan’s social self and her real desires whose tension prepares us for Handan’s tragic end. Throughout the novel, while male characters’ letters are sent and read, Handan’s letters are titled as ‘Handan’s sentiments’ and are never sent to their subjects, thereby sealing Handan’s sentiments as separate from her thoughts which can be socially expressed unlike her sentiments that belong to her inner life and are doomed to silence. This points to the gap between the image of the ideal woman, as created by the social world and her own desires. While the form of the novel is one that points to the fictionalized character of Handan as she is discussed by other characters, her real self remains hidden as she is given ‘author-ity’ only once through her unsent letter.

According to Hülya Adak, even though the heroines of Halide Edib’s early novels can never fully claim ‘author-ity’ as narrators, men who fall in love with and write about them lose their identity as their love grows and hence the heroines’ existence takes over the whole narrative.

The existence of the hero whose only function is to admire and write about the ideal woman, becomes meaningless with the death of the ideal woman; the function of the text and the author ends here.

Moran suggests that to highlight the qualities of her heroines, Halide Edib narrates the stories from the perspectives of men who at first have bad impressions of these woman, but later on discover their fascinating characters and fall in love with them. The Shirt of Flame is another example of such a change of perspective in male characters. While the narrator Peyami at first looks down on Anatolian Ayesha, he gradually recognizes that all the ‘true’ qualities of the Turkish people are embodied in her. Echoing a true incident from Halide Edib’s life, Ayesha gives a speech at a protest march in Sultanahmet square to criticize the Greek invasion of Smyrna. Another admirer of Ayesha, the colonel Ilhsan,

71Halide Edib, Handan, 216.
74Moran, Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış, p.118.
narrates the incident thus: ‘the bloody humiliation and bitter calamity imposed on the Turkish nation found their personified emblem in this maimed Ayesha.’ National resistance begins through Ayesha when she wittily criticizes Colonel Cook of the British army. Her witty response receives the admiration of the on-lookers, so much so that there and then they promise to take Smyrna back: ‘it is through this scene in a Shishly drawing room (in occupied Istanbul) that Halide Edib dramatizes the birth of national resistance’.

Unlike Handan, however, Ayesha does not become a victim of men who are not as ‘ideal’ as her. They instead begin to change to be worthy of her love. Ihsan who becomes one of Ayesha’s admirers, describes his changed self as ‘a creation of Ayesha.’ As Erdağ Göknar notes, Ayesha is capable of creating the new man of the nation and ‘in turn, Ihsan is willing to sacrifice himself to avenge the invasion of İzmir.’ However, step by step, Ayesha turns into the image of an ideal and consequently loses her physical existence. This is revealed through Ihsan’s imagery of Ayesha.

I had once seen a picture in my childhood, of a great Indian God wheeled through a crowded square where the worshippers threw themselves under the wheels and died, crushed in religious ecstasy. I felt like those Indian worshippers, I wanted to be crushed under the foot of her who was a symbol of love, strength and pity, a symbol of my suffering country, in the midst of fire and blood.

Handan, however, does not turn into an idealized image of a god with worshippers throwing themselves at her feet. While Ayesha’s soul rises to the level of a pure ideal, Handan’s soul falls into deliriums, causing her to forget who she really is.

Hüsnü Pasha’s choice of mistress reveals that what he cannot bear is not Handan’s physicality, but her identity. As opposed to Nazım’s admiration for Handan’s soul and his dismissing of Handan’s physicality, Hüsnü Pasha desires Handan’s physicality and despises her soul. His new mistress, apart from being blonde like Hüsnü Pasha’s previous mistresses, learns to imitate Handan whilst working as a maid for her. In a letter to Handan, Hüsnü Pasha tells her that he loves her and that he wants to possess all of her, but however much Handan looks like she gives him everything, there is always one thing missing, a sense of self-awareness in her that Hüsnü Pasha feels unable to possess. This reveals the tension between the modern expectations on women and the demands of the old order. As discussed above, while the ideal woman is expected to be an educated and modernized

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75 Halide Edib, *The Shirt of Flame*, p.16.
76 Göknar, ‘Turkish-Islamic Feminism Confronts Patriarchy: Halide Edib’s Divided Self’, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, 9 (2013) 32-57 (p.41).
78 Adak, ‘Divided Self’, 42.
individual, men still expect women to be obedient and selfless.

I cannot stand you; however modest, affectionate, and soft you are, there is that thing, an air around you that doesn’t have me; the fact that it is something else besides me saddens, bothers, tires me. I’m burning with the desire to drag and lay you down, crush you with my feet, roll your head in the mud. Therefore, I will not live with you. But you are mine and will remain mine. [...] my new mistress, I’ll tell you to save you from curiosity, is your *femme de chamber* for a week, Mod. [...] Even though she is a little smaller than you, her biggest merit is that when dressed, she looks like, no, reminds one of you. This is maybe because she was by your side for a week, she imitates even your flawless walking; to give me that ambiguous and torturous desire she reminds me of you enough with perfumes, similar evening dresses. In any case if she reminded me of you any more than that, just like you, I would go mad with the anger to crush and kill that thing in you that which is a stranger to me.

Mod is the only mistress who can convince Hüsnü Pasha to leave Handan because she can become Handan without *being* Handan. In other words, she provides Handan’s physicality but not her individuality. The problem, then, is not that she is not beautiful or that she is ‘too’ intelligent, but it is something else; it is her soul, her sense of self-awareness. When Hüsnü Pasha openly admits that the reason he is not with her is that she possesses this ‘thing’ that makes her Handan, illness befalls her. She is diagnosed with meningitis which results in her losing consciousness and hence her sense of self. Meningitis, being the last phase of syphilis, makes İpek Çalışlar question the possibility of Handan suffering from syphilis. Even though the text does not offer any specific clues to confirm Çalışlar’s suggestion, the possibility of Handan suffering from syphilis strengthens the arguments posed by the plot. She is punished both for her sense of self/soul and her physical and desirous body. In her delirious moments, her desire to become someone else, both physically and mentally reveals itself through her talking. Waiting by her side restlessly, Refik Cemal is the main witness to the baring of Handan’s soul. He describes Handan’s deliriums to his friend Server in a letter:

She was always living Hüsnü Pasha’s life. But not the life with her, but his life with his mistresses. She was Mademoiselle Juliette for a while. She was becoming the so called Juliette with her broken Paris accent. Then again Meli, a French name. Finally she was becoming Mod. With all that malicious laughter, to attract Hüsnü Pasha, she was taking their identities, talking like them, living like them. And among her deliriums, she was most careful not to reveal that she was Handan to this nightmare which was nibbling her soul. 
- Wait Hüsnü, wait. A new chemist dyes eyes. My eyes will be blue, my hair will be blond. My hands will be thin and veined just like hers.

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Handan’s ill state is described as ‘babylike’ or ‘childlike’ by Refik Cemal. She does not have a past or a future, but most importantly her self seems to have vanished with the illness. Accordingly, when Refik Cemal takes her to a quiet village as a part of her treatment and admits his love for her, she responds in an almost child-like state by kissing his hand and putting her head onto his lap. Refik Cemal writes of this incident to his friend Server, celebrating her love for him but noting that it does not resemble her love for Hüsnü Pasha; she loves Refik Cemal with full obedience, looking out for him wherever she goes. Refik Cemal feels like he totally possesses Handan, both her soul and body. Handan speaks very rarely -Refik Cemal teaches her how to speak again- and her response to Refik Cemal’s love is not that of a passionate lover’s, but more of a child in need of a parent. The sense of self which is presented to Refik Cemal even in the absence of Handan’s physical self when he first meets Neriman’s family, is destroyed with every step of the journey. Refik Cemal however, defines this state of their relationship as heaven, comparing himself and selfless Handan to Adam and Eve.

The chapters in Edib’s text where Neriman and Refik Cemal both describe Handan’s appearance as one that only highlights her eyes and her hair foreshadows Handan’s ‘wrongdoings’. Prior to going to a village for treatment, the doctor recommends the cutting off of Handan’s hair. Refik Cemal rejects cutting her hair which, according to him, is one of the main untouchable characteristics of Handan. The trope of hair-cutting points to both Handan’s feminine sexuality and whether or not she will finally conform by losing such a ‘characteristic’ part of her self. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein writes on the same trope that is used in George Elliot’s Mill on the Floss and notes that the cutting of Maggie’s hair represents ‘a liberation from the painful demands to conform to an aesthetics of femininity’.83 While Handan’s femininity is protected by Refik Cemal’s rejection of the cutting of her hair, in The Shirt of Flame, Ayesha’s femininity is sacrificed in pursuit of her nationalist ideal. When she dies at the war, Peyami finds her dead body with her ‘headcover [fallen back] and her dark short-haired head [appearing] like that of a child’.84 He then carries Ayesha’s dead body over to İhsan’s and unites their hands, saying ‘You have taken each other. You have entered Smyrna.’85 As Erdağ Göknar suggests, their union is the union of the national will and the national fight. Peyami dies at the hospital, after narrating the story of the national resistance through the story of Ayesha and İhsan. Upon

84Halide Edib, The Shirt of Flame, p.263.
85Ibid, p.264.
his death, his doctors read his diary notes, check the records and realize that in none of the
records are there any nurses named Ayesha or any commanders named Ihsan. According to
Göknar, Peyami’s story turns into the narrative of an ‘imagined community’ with the final
union of the national will and resistance. Thus Ayesha finally becomes physically absent, only existing as an ideal.

While Ayesha, with her cut-hair and her rejection of uniting with İhsan despite her
love for him, is reduced to a pure ideal of the nation, Handan is too physically present, too
feminine to be reduced to such a state. On the contrary, she loses her identity and is
reduced to a physical body. Her femininity, however, is not dangerous anymore; it is under
full control of Refik Cemal. Since Handan is not conscious enough to take care of her hair,
Refik Cemal is now in control of her locks. He combs them, caresses them, weaves them.
The very same hair, which was known for its length, and was a death trap for Nazım, is a
representation of her seductiveness as well as her independence. Now, when her locks are
under Refik Cemal’s control, from being Lilith, Handan is transformed into Eve.

Upon Handan’s death at the hospital, the narrative moves on to the third parties
who witness her funeral. The speakers are neighbours who have known Handan from the
outside throughout her life. As İnci Enginün notes, the novel presents how people perceive
the new Westernized woman from inside out; from the perspective of the ones near her, to
the outsiders who know her only barely. Thus Handan becomes a novel about ‘the new
woman’ and how she is perceived by the social circles surrounding her. Through Handan’s
tragic death, Halide Edib presents a critique of the contradictions of the exceptions on
women as formulated by the CUP government.

From Handan to Ayesha there is a step-by-step formation of subjectivity. Handan’s
illness reveals the first step, the narcissistic preoccupation with the body to be able to
experience it. Ayesha, on the other hand, becomes a fantasy, an image of the nation. In both
cases, they represent the ideal soul that men have to alter themselves. They teach men how
to have the phallus to finally possess the object of desire. In Handan’s case, men fail to do
so. In Ayesha’s case however, the two finally unite in death. Thus both texts position body
and physical desire in opposition to soul. The soul functions as a regulative and
heteronormative formulation that show both women and men how they should behave and
what they should value. Illness is used in these plots as a form of punishment that shows
the failure of the characters to leave their bodies behind to devote their lives to higher

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86 Adak, “Divided Self”, 44.
87 İnci Enginün, Yeni Türk Edebiyatı: Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e (1839-1923) (New Turkish Literature: From
purposes. This message however changes in Halide Edib’s later novels in accordance with the health politics of the government. As I will elaborate in the rest of the chapter, Halide Edib’s dismissing of the body in *Handan* and *The Shirt of Flame* turns into an inclusion of the body in *Mev’ut Hüküm* and *Tatarcık* where she defines good bodies and bad bodies for the greater good of the nation. Considering Halide Edib’s central position in the formation of the new Turkish nation until her exile in 1926, her use of health and sickness in her works also reflect the health politics of the modernization and independence movement in which bodies were found valuable only when they were devoted to a higher cause, the well-being of the nation.

3. Naturalism

When in 1917 Halide Edib published *Mev’ut Hüküm*, she made her inspiration for this work clear in her choice of dedication. The note on the first page of the novel reads ‘I dedicate this to the soul of Emile Zola’. Those familiar with Halide Edib’s works, would not be surprised by such a dedication. Her diary notes make her fascination with the works of Emile Zola quite clear. She defines him as her mentor and ‘the educator of her soul.’

Her fascination with Zola is so strong that her first encounter with Zola’s works shakes her system of belief and leads her to her bed, suffering from depression. Among various comments she makes on Zola in her memoir, she notes:

> There is no other writer I know who stands up for truth with such temperamental passion. He wanted the whole of it; his meticulous idealism would not allow him to temper it. The higher the standard he set before himself for man the harder he struck at his weaknesses. He attacked man’s vices, exaggerating into absolute folly the sexual ones. I do not know why he was so much haunted by man’s sexual weaknesses; there are plenty of other shortcomings. But Zola seems to have been aware of them also, though only in his later works, as ‘Les Quatres Evangiles.’ Zola evidently thought that the sexual perversions were fundamental ones in man’s character and that unless he were made sane and normal in that respect he could not reach higher levels.

Her fascination with Zola was a long term one. Although the comments above date back to 1901-1902, she did not publish *Mev’ut Hüküm* until 1917. Among all of her romance novels, *Mev’ut Hüküm* is perhaps the cruellest one. It explicitly judges and condemns how sexual desire can blind even the most ‘objective’ human soul. Before detailing the comparison between *Mev’ut Hüküm* and her previous sentimental novels, I first want to point to one specific way that Halide Edib describes Zola: as an idealist. This definition however is a problematic one, since Zola himself is the one who condemns

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88Halide Edib, *Memoirs*, p.208
idealists for being entrapped in themselves in search of truth and describes himself as a man of science, a magistrate who has the capacity to enlighten science about the motivations of human behaviour through what he calls ‘experimental novel[s]’.  

Zola borrows this term from the French physiologist Claude Bernard whose *Introduction to Experimental Science* became a foundational work both in the fields of social and positive sciences. In this work, Bernard differentiates the nature of observation and the nature of experiment and suggests that only through experimental science can humanity learn and advance. Bernard argues that both an experimentalist and an idealist begin with an idea and yet while the latter builds their reasoning on that idea to reach a general truth, the purpose of the former is to leave the idea behind through objectivity and the external laws of nature. Emile Zola’s naturalism finds its trigger with this differentiation and he describes the experimental method as the only means to achieve a truly naturalist novel.

We are making use, in a certain way, of scientific psychology to complete scientific physiology; and to finish the series we have only to bring into our studies of nature and man the decisive tool of the experimental method. In one word, we should operate on the characters, the passions, on the human and social data, in the same way that the chemist and the physicist operate on inanimate beings, and as the physiologist operates on living beings. Determinism dominates everything. It is scientific investigation, it is experimental reasoning, which combats one by one the hypotheses of the idealists, and which replaces purely imaginary novels by novels of observation and experiment.

What is, then, the experimental novel and how does Emile Zola claim to reach the truth through his novels? For Zola there is no difference between an experimental scientist and an experimental novelist. Both aim to reach the truth through experiments, both derive their power from their loyalty to determinism. According to Zola, while the former is ‘the magistrate of nature,’ the latter is ‘the magistrate of men and their passions’. Following Bernard’s suggestion on the laws of nature governing the human body, he suggests human behaviours are directed by the very same rules and for that reason, he notes, ‘Without daring, as I say, to formulate laws, I consider that the question of heredity has a great influence in the intellectual and passionate manifestations of man’.

From then on he imposes a mission on the novel arguing that the experimental

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92Ibid, p.27.
94Ibid, p.10.
novel will help scientists to understand the social behaviours and passions of men. Once it becomes known, it will benefit the whole of humanity, since what was once accepted as uncontrollable will be indeed controllable and stoppable. In other words, the experimental novel will help the well-being of society by pointing to overwhelming passions so that ‘we shall construct a practical sociology, and our work will be a help to political and economical sciences’, which would enable the legislators ‘to regulate life, to regulate society, to solve in time all the problems of socialism, above all, to give justice a solid foundation by solving through experiment the questions of criminality’.

Like an experimentalist physiologist finding the poisonous or rotten part of the body, an experimental novelist finds the poisonous part of society so that it can be eliminated.

According to Zola, this shows that literature has too become a science and this is what naturalism means: ‘and by naturalism, I say again, is meant the experimental method, the introduction of observation and experiment into literature’. Halide Edib’s interest in Zola’s naturalism caused her to question her own mysticism. In her works, she reformulates Zola’s criticism on the passions of men, and positions sexual and worldly desire in opposition to idealism. Her Mev’ut Hüküm, reveals her support and doubts about Zola’s naturalist approach: on the one hand, she uses sick bodies, mental illnesses and venereal diseases as devices to exemplify what she sees as unfit for society, but on the other hand she does not condemn her characters to a deterministic end, but rather offers idealism as a way of redemption. Her relatively conservative take on Zola’s naturalism was not the only example in the history of Turkish literature in which Zola functioned as a benchmark in the discussion that revolved around the question: how much ‘filth’ could they and should they depict?

4. Debates on Naturalism in the Ottoman Empire

On February 1887, Beşir Fuad, described as the first ‘naturalist’ in Turkish literature, committed suicide. His reflection below reveals a particular fascination with Zola:

Should we make youth read La Dame aux camelias or Zola’s Nana? Of course we should make them read Nana, since Nana is a text that reflects the results of sexual passion.

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95 Ibid, pp.29-30.
96 Ibid, p. 48.
His, however, was no ordinary suicide. He cut his veins and started taking notes on his experience, attempting to write the first experimental text in Turkish literature. Inspired by Voltaire, Ludwig Büchner and Claude Bernard among other materialists, Beşir Fuad was an exception in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century in his rejection of idealism and his praise of materialism when it came to literary form. What made him exceptional was not his fascination with positivism however, since this was already a growing trend after the Tanzimat period. His difference stemmed from the fact that the novelists of the period had rather a more ‘conservative’ understanding of positivism. Hoping to bring back the powerful past of the Ottoman Empire, the first novelists who had received their education in the Translation Office were hoping to create a combination of Western positivism and Islamic norms, meaning that the truth was in Islam and the application of positivist thought would lead them there. As Ahmet O. Evin notes, their position in the translation bureau meant that they would have had close relationships with the centre of the administration which was a burden in relation to their openness to realism. They were first and foremost ‘reformers, literary and otherwise, than […] creative artists. Thus, they had adopted the role of a ‘paternalistic leader’ who was responsible of the well-being of his community which resulted in ‘the inability of the writer to disengage himself from the latent values of his immediate community and to observe society from a distance’.

The following generation of intelligentsia, however, had more distance from the political power structure. Beşir Fuad, who belonged to this generation, rejected his predecessors’ epistemological reasoning. While writers of the Tanzimat period saw ‘Lamartine and Hugo as the masters of poetry’ and ‘romantics like Hugo, father and son Dumas, Chateaubriand, Bernardin Saint Pierre and Ann Radcliffe as the masters of novels,’ Beşir Fuad praised and instead translated Zola, Charles Dickens, Flaubert, Auguste Comte, Diderot, Claude Bernard and Herbert Spencer among many others. He published a monograph on Victor Hugo in which he included a discussion on Hugo’s criticism of Zola and Claude Bernard’s experimentalism. In his discussion, Fuad

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101 Ahmet Ö. Evin, Origins and Development of The Turkish Novel (Minneapolis: Bibliotecha Islamica, 1983) p.175.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid, p.177.
104 Parla, Babalar ve Oğullar, p.63.
106 Beşir Fuad, Victor Hugo (İstanbul: Oızgur Yayınları, 2011), pp.131-149.
criticizes Hugo’s critique and sides with Zola and Bernard by suggesting that realists act as doctors of society and aim to know the characteristics of the illness of society to be able to cure it.\textsuperscript{107} For Beşir Fuad, writing poetry and sentimentalist works was not worthy of praise and what was beneficial for the whole society was writing realist and naturalist works that would reflect a reality that could be observed through the five senses.\textsuperscript{108} His publication raised immense criticism with many others writing in response to his criticisms towards what were considered to be the best examples of literature. One name, among many, is worth mentioning in the margins of this chapter to give a clearer picture on the place of Zola in the development of Turkish literature: Ahmed Midhat Efendi. A further discussion on the place of Zola in the development of Turkish novel will help to clarify how Halide Edib uses Zola’s naturalism and why she combines naturalism and tragedy in her own version of a deterministic novel.

Since the Tanzimat period, young Ottomans had already started translating examples of French literature, and their interest in materialism led them to discussions on realism and naturalism in literature. Ahmet Midhat and Namık Kemal, among others, did not differentiate naturalism and realism from one another, yet their understandings of realism differed from one to the other.\textsuperscript{109} Perhaps the main mutual point was their criticism towards traditional Ottoman literature. Novels therefore were innovative devices: new forms and subjects were welcome but only to an extent. Literature was first and foremost didactic. The complicated language of the traditional divan poetry and the supernatural plot-lines of traditional folk tales such as Leyla and Majnun were far, in their view, from being educative for the public.

As discussed earlier, the novels written by these writers could be seen as didactic in that the writers interfered with the story, often to judge the characters or to highlight the moral of the story. When it came to translations from the French, Ottoman readers had a variety of options from Chateaubriand, Stendhal, and Balzac to Victor Hugo and Guy de Maupassant. Their interest in realism led them to discussions on simplifying the language of the novels so that readers could understand them easily, and narrating stories which were closer to ‘real’ life. The limits they drew on these, however, differed from one Young Ottoman to the other. In the case of language, Beşir Fuad was full-heartedly opposed to the use of metaphors and hyperbole, and criticised sentimentalisists for using the heart as the organ through which feelings and love were expressed or experienced, while science

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid, p.148.
\textsuperscript{108}Hanioğlu, ‘Blueprints for a future society’, p.38.
\textsuperscript{109}Evin, Origins and Development, p. 215.
showed that it was the brain which directed the emotions. What should be the subject of a novel was another major debate topic among them: Zola received the biggest share of critique here. Ahmed Midhat for instance, condemned Zola for only writing about ugly and sick parts of society and highlighted how detrimental this could be for the education of the readers. He was also critical of Zola’s ‘realism,’ since according to him literature had to leave room for the imagination. Beşir Fuad, on the other hand, was in support of the idea that a writer should first and foremost be a scientist and write only what could also be proved scientifically.

Beşir Fuad’s death did not put an end to the storm that his work on Victor Hugo had created. After his death, Ahmed Midhat, perhaps the one of the biggest enemies of naturalism, published his own preferred version of a ‘naturalist’ novel, Muşahedat in 1890. Nabizade Nazim Efendi and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil were among the other prolific authors who attempted to write realist/naturalist novels, yet Zola remained as a point of discussion. To what extent were they willing to depict ‘filth’ and filthy parts of society? Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil writes in his Hikaye, ‘The Goncourts are also realists but in spite of this their work is not filthy. There is filth in Zola, why?’

Zola’s novels and his understanding of naturalism worked as a dynamic and thought-provoking barrier for the novelists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century; one that would lead the way to positivist thought, but exceeding the barrier was regarded as highly dangerous, morally corrupt and radical. As Evin notes however, the revolutionary Young Turks who later on overthrew the monarchy in 1912 would be born from the seeds of such radicalism.

What then, in this context, is naturalism and why did Halide Edib find Zola’s naturalism the closest thing to her thoughts and to her writing? Zola defines naturalism as follows: ‘Naturalism in letters is equally the return to nature and to man, direct observation, exact anatomy, the acceptance and depicting of what is’.

In Raymond Williams’ words, it was ‘the idea of the application of scientific method in literature: specifically the study of heredity in the story of a family, but also more generally, in the sense of describing and interpreting human behaviour in strictly natural terms, excluding the hypothesis of some controlling or directing force outside human nature’.

Halide Edib’s Mev‘ut Hüküm however reveals the different direction she takes from Zola’s naturalism. Her choice of combining her naturalist plot with the plot of a tragedy,

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113 Raymond Williams, Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society (London: Flamingo, 1984), p.217.
Othello, I argue reveals her own scepticism towards determinism. Accordingly, her comments on Zola in her memoir suggest that her understanding of Zola’s criticism of sexual desire was a spiritual one, rather than a positivist one. According to her, Zola presented grotesque images to punish men for their desires of the flesh. She notes that ‘he lighted up portions of the human soul with his fastidious and very French idealism; he chastised men by making grotesque statues and pictures of their vileness.’

Such sexual desire was accordingly stopping mankind from reaching a higher truth: ‘Zola’s soul sensed an invisible oppression created by the lower powers which dominate man and make him eager to suppress truth’.

‘Zola’, Edib argued, ‘evidently thought that the sexual perversions were fundamental ones in man’s character and that unless he were made sane and normal in that respect he could not reach higher levels’. What she means by ‘higher level’ however does not have determinist connotations, but rather she points to a purification of the soul from worldly desires to unite with a divine power: ‘Zola’s test is the hardest test for sincere and piously inclined souls, but if they can come out of it whole nothing afterward can change their belief in the existence of a Divine Power’.

What then was this test against? For this, she uses a metaphor:

I always identify Zola with a picture of Christ chasing the money-lenders from the Temple. I do not remember whose the picture is, but in it Christ has the unrelenting eyes of a destroyer, full of a holy horror, such horror as Pasteur would have had in his eyes if he had seen a tube of microbes of some terrible sort getting loose in a human dwelling.

Halide Edib’s understanding of Zola then suggests that the vices of human soul are like viruses in society and that they should be eliminated of one wishes to reach to a higher level. In my reading of Halide Edib’s Mev’ut Hüküm, I will suggest that her alteration of naturalism, through combining it with tragedy, points to her opinions about the ‘soul’ and how it needs to pass beyond material desires to reach to a higher level. In Mev’ut Hüküm a young doctor and a true believer of determinism dominates the narrative. While Kasım Şinasi treats the ‘viruses’ in society, however, what he misses is the viruses in his own soul. When he kills his syphilitic wife Sara in a fit of jealousy, she dies tragically but gracefully with her soul dedicated to the higher ideals of nursing and helping wounded soldiers.

Kasım Şinasi, on the other hand, falls from grace due to his failure to cure himself of his own humane vices.

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114 Halide Edib, Memoir, p.209.
115 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
5. From Degenerate Sara to the Fit Body of Lale: Saving the Soul

Even though Halide Edib draws a direct line between her work and Emile Zola by dedicating her novel ‘to the soul of Emile Zola’, she still leaves a blank point, a mark of doubt by choosing to combine Zola’s naturalism with a tragedy, *Othello* by William Shakespeare. In this section, I will argue that the love story between the protagonist, doctor Kasım Şinasi and his love interest – the degenerate Sara- echo the principles of the experimental novel as put by Zola, but the second part of the novel where the plot follows the lines of *Othello*, blurs the lines of the naturalist novel and turns human blindness into a tragic determinist point. It is almost as if in Halide Edib’s novel, there is no hope, since human passions are powerful enough to take over any traces of objectivity in the mind. Yet there is also something not entirely naturalistic in it, with tragedy displacing the rules of nature and scientific approach.

*Mev’ut Hüküm* focuses on a tragic love story between doctor Kasım Şinasi who returns to the Ottoman Empire after studying medicine in Europe, and Sara, who is a victim of a venereal disease as well as inherited madness. Kasım Şinasi is identifiable as a common ‘type’ since the Tanzimat period: men educated in medical and military schools in Turkey, followed by studies in Europe. As discussed in the first chapter, upon their return, many of these men found themselves in important positions, actively taking place in the revolutionary movement. In other words, *Mev’ut Hüküm* portrays a society who had become a patient to heal from discord, poverty and ignorance in working classes and the spoilt attitudes of the upper classes who wasted their lives and energies with alcohol and adultery, hence actively involved in the spread of venereal diseases. *Mev’ut Hüküm* however is not only a novel about the ‘degeneration and discord’ in society, but also the fall of this ideal scientific man. Kasım Şinasi devotes himself to the well-being of the nation until he too is struck by his inner discord in the form of a blind passion in the face of sexual desire towards Sara, a woman who is a victim of degeneration. The plot puts these two opposite characters together in an almost experimentalist context to observe the results of this union. Whereas the first half of the novel, where Kasım Şinasi and Sara are married, is a glorification of a hero who himself acts as a magistrate of society, the second half turns into a tragedy that strongly echoes and often reproduces parts of Shakespeare’s *Othello*: Kasım Şinasi ends up killing Sara believing that she is having an affair with another doctor, Kami.

Halide Edib’s removal of the race issue from her alteration of *Othello*, points to the typification of her characters in the novel. While Sara and Sururi are the spoilt and
narcissistic members of upper middle class who are only concerned with pleasure-seeking, Kasım Şinasi is presented as a scientific mind whose belief in positivism and determinism turns him into a magistrate of society but makes him oblivious to his own human passions. I believe the omitting of race allows Halide Edib to make a point about men in general and how even the most objective and scientific mind can fall from grace. In “Haply, for I Am Black”: *Othello* and the Semiotics of Race and Otherness’ Elliott Butler-Evans points to the negative attributions of blackness in the “literature” of the Elizabethan period [as well as] in the written texts produced by numerous travelers, traders, and ethnologists that characterized blacks, inter alia, as bestial, devoid of reason, sexually permissive, and extremely jealous, and at the same time, ingenuous and of a free and open nature’, and notes: ‘the association of [Othello] with blackness and its numerous signifiers […] clearly locates him in the world of the undesirable’. 119 Thus, he suggests, ‘The articulation of explicit and implicit bodies of binary oppositions used to identify Othello – European/African, Christian/Moor, fair/dark, civilized/primitive – establishes the textual instance in which Moorishness and blackness are fused to complete a broader and more focused discourse of racial difference and Otherness’. 120 As a young, successful, wealthy and single doctor, however, Kasim Şinasi of *Mev’ut Hüküm* is far from being ‘undesirable’. Almost all the upper class women find him attractive and try to seduce him. Their desire to seduce him is only burdened by his unresponsiveness to women’s suggestive behaviours which makes him even more heroic and ideal, an honest man of high morals and discipline. Therefore, the plot portrays the fall of an ideal man.

In the first half of the novel, the narrative mostly focalizes on the thoughts of Kasim Şinasi, yet it often employs dramatic irony whenever Kasim Şinasi fails to read the behaviours of the other characters. The implied narrator is an omniscient one and this is a ‘writerly’ text where the narrator is the only authority: Kasim fails to really understand what he sees, while the narrator does not. This forms the direct relationship between Halide Edib’s *Mev’ut Hüküm* and Emile Zola’s notion of the experimental novel. In line with Zola’s manifesto, the narrative of *Mev’ut Hüküm* sets out an experiment. It borrows its observatory attitude from its protagonist, Kasim Şinasi. Yet soon enough, we begin to realize that Kasim Şinasi is not the observer he thinks he is, but is instead the object of observation: he is portrayed as an objective and scientific mind without any social skills.

120 Ibid, pp.144-145.
He observes people’s behaviours as if they are ‘microbes blending in glass cartridges.’ However, the experiment of the novel begins when Kasım Şinasi leaves his laboratory and joins society as an active agent. This is the experiment the plot puts into action: Is it possible to remain objective and rational against one’s own desires in the midst of contingencies?

Throughout the text the narrator pays particular attention to the physical characteristics of the characters in the plot and usually these observations are focalized through Kasım’s perspective. The facial features of the characters serve as a foreshadowing element. One example of this is when in the opening chapter, his uncle’s wife Behire, is described as a woman of young and pretty facial features with one exception: her tired looking eyes. Kasım looks for signs of a disease in the features of the woman. When he notices the same tired expression in her lips, he thinks to himself: ‘a hysterical woman!’ This judgement comes before he knows her, when their verbal exchange amounts to little more than two sentences. This section not only shows Kasım’s ‘scientific’ approach towards human relations, but also how much physiognomy plays a crucial role in Halide Edib’s oeuvre. As discussed above, in works like Handan or Kalb Ağrısı, the dichotomy of blonde haired/dark haired woman is used to differentiate between not-so-clever or interesting but beautiful women like Neriman of Handan or Azize of Kalb Ağrısı (‘Azize’ literally means female Saint) and not-so-beautiful but brave and witty women like Handan or Zeyno of Kalb Ağrısı. In Mev’ut Hüküm the same dichotomy once again marks out Sara as beautiful but not clever, and Behiye as a witty and masterful plotter. In her later novel, Tatarcık, Lale whose nickname Tatarcık gives the title to the novel, becomes the embodiment of a healthy, sporty and hard-working ‘blonde’ race, whereas dark-haired Zehra is portrayed as a sickly woman, a remnant from the elite of the Ottoman Empire who have lost all of their wealth and power. Lale is the idealized figure of the new republic, whereas Zehra is portrayed as malicious and dangerous. She is another master-plotter who does not understand the charm in Lale’s simplicity and fitness.

Kasım Şinasi’s physiognomic characteristics indicate his inner character. He is an ideal member of society. The narrator often emphasizes that he is a healthy man; it especially underlines this detail when noting that, ‘even though he [is] a healthy man’ he chooses to observe the attraction between men and women, not wanting to be an active agent himself: ‘since his imagination left him uninterested about the parts of humans apart from their flesh, blood and bones, he neither spotted a desirable attraction nor did he notice

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Halide Edib, Mev’ut, p.18.
any detestable lie, treachery or vanity in women'.

Unlike Halide Edib’s many other works, here the hero becomes ‘an ideal’. The descriptions of his strong body and wide shoulders are often repeated. With his strong look and yet sincere and trustworthy eyes, he is portrayed as a ‘gentleman from birth’ with a scientific approach towards human relationships untainted by sexual passions. The narrator defines him as a longawaited son of parents who have done everything he asked them to do. Still, the narrator notes that Kasım Şinasi has never been a ‘spoilt, sick child’ but he has always been a healthy and hard-working one, unlike the other examples of upper class children who are spoilt and go on to become sickly and weak. He finally leaves for Europe to study medicine; however, he does not go to Europe to become a famous and rich doctor but for the love of medicine. In other words, Kasım is not portrayed as somebody who seeks social standing, but rather somebody who follows his passions sincerely. The text later defines the social life of the upper and middle classes of Istanbul where both men and women admire Europe and try to act like Europeans, as if on a theatre stage. Kasım Şinasi is alien to such façade. During his time in Europe, members of the Young Turks had organized a coup and had forced Sultan Abdulhamid II to restore the constitution in 1908. Growing up in an empire ruled by the oppressive policies of the Sultan Abdulhamid II, Kasım Şinasi finds a different social life on his return. Like Othello who is portrayed as an outsider in Venetian society, Kasım Şinasi’s already introvert character is alienated even more following his education abroad. He observes society, his family members and his patients not only as a doctor but also as a foreigner.

In addition to his foreignness, spending his entire life in laboratories, away from people, makes him completely oblivious to the tricks people play on him. He does not recognize Behiye’s efforts to seduce him; he does not see the sexual undertones in upper class women’s interest in him. He is not only puzzled by women’s behaviours, but also by his own reactions. He finds his ‘burning cheeks’ strange and he questions why he feels excited when he interacts with his uncle’s wife Behiye. However, his questioning is narrated within a few flat sentences, much like questions that are asked during an experiment: ‘Kasım was thinking about the reason why a kind help to his uncle’s wife had shaken him this much’. Nonetheless, the questioning is not continued and is left without resolution. He observes, notifies and questions the clues in his mind, but never in depth and never with a resolution. Behiye and his uncle’s son Hayri are other crucial examples of

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122Ibid. p.10.
123Ibid, p.22
124Ibid, p.23.
125Ibid, p.22.
physiognomic signifiers of the text. Defined as a ‘lifeless’ child with ‘[a] meaningless head and skinny legs’ by the narrator, Hayri dies from scarlet fever while being taken care of by Kasim. However, he does not show any sign of emotion towards the death of the child. He continues to observe his uncle’s and Behiye’s reactions upon Hayri’s death with the attitude of a scientist. His observations don’t bring him any wisdom and he continues to be ignorant in human relations. Much like Othello’s falling for the tricks of Iago, Kasim too easily falls for the tricks Behiye plays in to separate Kasim and Sara. As much as he fails to recognise Behiye’s true nature, he fails to recognize Sara’s. In the end, this becomes his fatal flaw: his blindness and inability to read Sara’s true feelings, causes him to kill her. Whereas the narrator never leaves any gaps in its authority, it focalizes on other characters’ minds when Kasim fails to read them. He is therefore a tragic character whose tragedy comes from his blindness. When in the end Kasim injects morphine into Sara’s veins, the answer is given to the question set out by the plot: human souls are not easily readable as if they are microbes in a tube. In other words, through the gap between the narrator and Kasım Şinasi, Edib depicts the tragic fall of the scientific mind. On the one hand, she follows Zola’s principles by creating an experiment; on the other, she moves beyond Zola by making Zola’s experimental man the subject of her experiment.

Kasım Şinasi’s position in society as a foreigner gives the narrative a chance to portray society through the lens of science. When he decides to open his own private medical office his old colleague Professor Remzi warns him about his prospective patients. According to Professor Remzi, female members of high classes visit doctors to compensate for the lack of attention from their husbands, while the real patients – members of the poor classes - cannot afford to visit the private offices of the doctors and instead, choose to use traditional methods of healing and home-made medicine. Professor Remzi, therefore warns Kasım about the art of keeping his clientèle: he needs to act cunningly and satisfy the women’s needs even when they are not really ill. In this dialogue, the narrator continues to act as a scientist by drawing a portrait of society and grouping the behaviours of these ‘poor human machines’.126

Through Şinasi’s private office, the difference between poor and rich neighbourhoods is stressed. As spoilt women from the upper strata of society in Istanbul behave badly, trying to get attention while at the same time faking European manners, Kasım however finds himself feeling sympathetic towards the women of the working classes. Kasim begins to treat poor patients three days a week in his office, sometimes

126Halide Edib, Mev’ut, p. 32.
visiting them in their own houses. He meets Ayşe Kadın on one of these days when she visits him to tell him about her sick husband who cannot walk to the office due to his condition. When Kasım visits the patient in their neighbourhood, the narrative defines the sacrificing and hard-working Ayşe Kadın positively, while drawing a negative portrait of Ayşe Kadın’s husband who demands to be taken care of by his wife without making any changes to his personal habits, like smoking tobacco. The criticism towards men is evident in both classes. While Ayşe Kadın’s husband is threatening to poison his ‘clean’ and pure hearted wife with his dirty disease, Sara and her husband Sururi’s relationship draws a similar portrait in the wealthy classes. Being an unfaithful husband, Sururi not only cheats on his wife Sara, but he also ‘poisons her’ with a venereal disease. Thus the text portrays women as the victims of self-interested men regardless of their class.

The diseases of society are listed throughout the plot: the progress of society is hindered, since the high classes lead spoilt and useless lives, venereal diseases are spread by unfaithful husbands, and poor neighbourhoods suffer from tuberculosis due to unhealthy living conditions. The judgemental position of the narrative, usually narrated through Kasım’s eyes, is also in line with the medical discourse of the period. Through Kasım Şinasi, the narrative observes all the groups that were found undesirable: ‘the urban poor, the mentally ill and psychopaths (the rich who gained money either by inheritance or through fraud)’. Halide Edib utilizes her doctor protagonist throughout the narrative to judge, ‘magistrate’ and measure the ills of society. For instance, through Sururi’s alcoholism, Kasım Şinasi judges men for wasting their time on nightlife activities where they consume alcohol and have an uncontrollable sexual life.

There was no power like family, occupation or willpower to inhibit this addiction. This was a racial disease. The country was darkened and burnt by this debauchery that was a nest to filthy diseases that had rotted the race. An Anatolian boy who spent his entire life suffering from poverty would waste his modest fortune on cards in coffee houses or on raki [a traditional alcoholic drink made of anise] while sons of pashas or young masters would waste all their money and health in Beyoğlu [also known as Pera; district in Istanbul

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127 It should also be noted that Halide Edib wrote *Mev’ut Hüküm* in the year when she got married to her second husband, Dr. Adnan Adıvar. Dr Adnan Adıvar later on served as the first Minister of Health of the first parliamentary period (This parliament is also known as the founder of the republic which would be formally founded on 29 October 1923). Malaria, syphilis, trachoma and tuberculosis were the first targets of the Adıvar period.

which is/was home to cafes, shops and saloons. But at the same time, women and children with their patient but dark eyes were silently spreading the poison and the disaster of debauchery diseases to the race.

The description of alcohol and nightlife as *racial diseases* is presented by Kasım and through him, the narrative; observations on not only the patients but race in general with judgements that echo the language of a scientific experiment are dominant in the text. The narrative of *Mev'ut Hüüküm* especially focuses on venereal diseases and alcoholism as causes for both physical as well as moral corruption in the nation that eats families up behind closed doors. The moral judgement of the narrative also sides with the women and children of poorer classes. Edib’s social critique creeps in through the narrative: while she criticizes women of the upper classes for their imitation of Europeans and their idleness, women of the working class are portrayed as self-sacrificing and hard-working. The narrative draws a portrait of the living conditions of poor neighbourhoods with babies having weak constitutions due to the lack of medical institutions, children weakened by lack of nutrition and mothers who are not aware of the ways and means to protect their children from these dangers. The didactic nature of the text is revealed with Kasım Şinasi analysing the conditions and deciding to open a delivery room and dispensary in the area to help children and to educate mothers. The narrative draws an opposition between Kasım Şinasi and other members of the upper classes: the former dedicates his free time and spends money on the well-being of the nation while the latter lead useless lives. Kasım Şinasi opens up the subject to his mentor, Professor Remzi, who is both impressed by Kasım Şinasi’s selflessness and at the same time sceptical about his plans as he doubts peoples’ understanding and acceptance of modern medicine. The novel therefore not only gives a message to the general public on hygienic issues and on the ills of alcohol and nightlife (‘the racial diseases’), but it also works as a guide on the needs of the nation and how members of the upper class should behave.

The criticism towards members of the upperclass points to the change in discourse of health and sickness in relation to class. While in *Handan* illness is dramatized to highlight Handan’s suffering, in *Mev'ut Hüüküm* the perception begins to change. Sara is a member of the upperclass and she is found to be too proud by the patients when she

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129 In the 18th century, increasing trade between the European states and the Ottoman Empire, accompanied with a will to modernize Istanbul, triggered a major socioeconomic transformation of the area. By the end of the 19th century, Pera [Beyoğlu], with its Levantine architecture, European-style shopping and entertainment venues, and mostly non-Muslim population, had turned into Istanbul’s ‘Frankish town.’ Arus Yumul, ‘A prostitute lodging in the bosom of Turkishness: Istanbul’s Pera and its representation,’ *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 30 (2009), 57-72 (p.58).
131 Ibid, p.78.
decides to help Kasım Şinasi in the dispensary. Even though the narrative condemns the lifestyles of elites, it still does not condemn Sara for being from the elite. When Kasım Şinasi is at war, she voluntarily begins working in the dispensary to everybody’s surprise. Here the text functions as a didactic one in showing how the women of the upper classes should behave. Similarly in Tatarcık, the narrative portrays Lale as a regulatory ideal. She is a hard-working member of the nation who works to help people around her. After graduating from school, Lale is not in search of a husband like Zehra is, but rather she defines ‘civilizing’ the villagers as her life goal. While Zehra is defined as sickly, Lale is dynamic and sporty, and her swimming and fishing abilities impress the men of the village.

While the first half of the Mev’ut Hüküm draws a scientific portrait of society, the plot moves forward through Kasım’s interest in Sara. She is described in angelic imagery when Kasım first sees her which is a direct opposition to the condition she is in. Kasım visits Sara and Sururi’s house one evening after receiving a note from Sururi about a medical emergency: he has passed on a venereal disease to his wife. Kasım first sees Sara’s photo while waiting in the living room. He is deeply affected by her beauty with her blond hair, fair skin and blue eyes; a wave of emotions pass over him, a significant first since the start of the novel. He then proceeds to her room and perceives the pink and white colours of her bedroom which remind him of a bridal or a new baby’s room. The contradictory depiction of Sara continues when later in the novel Sara’s husband Sururi comes home drunk, hits her and vomits. Kasım listens to what happens behind closed doors and his mind imagines the scene where, while Sururi’s filth covers the whole room, it fails to touch Sara who instead rises above the filth, untouched.¹³²

The first time Sara’s thoughts take over the narrative is when she witnesses her husband’s death. Starting as a monologue that depicts her husband’s death, soon her thoughts dominate the narrative in free indirect speech where she questions her fears. For the first time she is not narrated as a woman who masks her reactions or emotions. Her childhood fear of losing her mind is narrated openly and the deterministic nature of the text is revealed when she asks Kasım to kill her if he suspects that syphilis or madness will make her lose consciousness. Mev’ut Hüküm, meaning ‘promised verdict’, underlines the deterministic quality of the text. It not only points to the promise that Sara forces Kasım to make. It also points to the deterministic nature of the text: Sara, from the moment of her birth is doomed due to her hereditary qualities. The madness of her mother marks her as one of the undesirables in society. This becomes more evident when Kasım reads her

¹³²Ibid, p.86.
characteristic qualities in her daughter’s behaviours. Sara was not only born with a deficiency in her blood, she also passes these qualities to her own daughter. When Kasım Şinasi hears about Sara for the first time, it is when Atıfe, Sara’s daughter, is having a fit. ‘She is the child of a fiery, stubborn, elegant but very angry, unstable and sick woman’, he states judging by the child’s behaviours. The madness in her also shows itself in her character: much like her ‘mad’ mother, she too is a slave to her physical desires. She marries an unfaithful but handsome man when she is young, not minding her family’s opposition. She sleeps with him before marriage, another clue of her excessively passionate character. Her relationship with Sururi is especially a sexual one, this can be observed even by the various other characters of the text, which is an unforgivable crime in Halide Edib’s *oeuvre*. She is therefore doomed since she, like Handan, is too physically existent, too passionate.

Much like Zola’s Nana, she brings destruction to Kasım who is excessively in control of his emotions by holding onto his scientific approach. Eventually his masculine desire for Sara begins to threaten his scientific approach towards life. Sara’s physicality begins to threaten Kasım Şinasi’s objectivity. When he first finds out that Sururi has given Sara the disease, he feels utterly angry towards Sururi while feeling pity and admiration for Sara. After weeks of treating her, he then decides not to go to his office on a day when he is supposed to see patients from poor neighbourhoods, but rather he decides to take Behiye to see Sara. A radical decision even he himself notices and questions. Step by step, his love for Sara starts to shake his observant, passive, experimental attitude towards people. Later when he finally admits to himself that he loves her, the expressions and the imagery of the text moves from scientific to passionate and the line that connects the two is syphilis. The narrator first notes, ‘Kasım accepted with a scientific certainty that he loved Sara’, and then it begins to list the steps towards the occurrence of this love. Then, he admits that the first real moment of love was when he first saw her in bed, with ‘bloody red spots on her dangerous and poisonous face’.\(^{133}\) His love for Sara is the strongest when she interacts with ‘filth.’ The ideal image of Kasım Şinasi begins to shift.

After Sururi’s death, Kasım and Sara get married and Kasım’s emotions make him lose control more and more. He begins to neglect his work, stops thinking clearly and is taken over by his passion for Sara. One evening, for instance, Kasım feels mesmerised by Sara’s beauty and feels an urge to kill her to satisfy his desire to consume her. While early in the novel the influence of Zola is evident, in the second half of the novel, the tragic

\(^{133}\text{Ibid, p.70.}\)
element gains pace as Kasım Şinasi turns more and more into Othello, his uncontrollable desire taking charge. What remains the same in both parts of the novel however, is Kasım Şinasi’s blindness to other people’s emotions. While in the first half, his blindness was caused by his scientific approach to life, in the second half it is passion that blinds him.

The couple’s marriage is met with surprise by their social circle. Their surprise is similar to but deeply different from the characters’ reactions to Desdemona and Othello’s marriage in Shakespeare’s tragedy. In ‘Literature and Racism: The Example of Othello’ S. E. Ogude points to Brabantio’s reasoning of Desdemona and Othello’s love, in which he accuses witchcraft as the reason behind Desdemona’s fascination with Othello, ‘To fall in love with what she feared to look on! / It is a judgment maim’d and most imperfect/ That will confess perfection so could err./Against all rules of nature,’ and notes:

Both Iago and Roderigo state that the match between Desdemona and Othello is unnatural, that there is something not quite right about it: an old black ram […] a white ewe; your fair daughter […] a lascivious Moor. The pairs do not fit. To Brabantio, too, Desdemona’s falling in love with Othello seems wholly unnatural […] All the ingredients on which Othello’s jealousy is nurtured are to be found in the above passage. They constitute Iago’s gateway into Othello’s mind.\(^\text{135}\)

In Mev ‘ut Hüküm, however, Sara is found unworthy of this marriage. While she is a widower with a child, a history of a venereal disease and poor hereditary qualities, Kasım Şinasi is a successful and wealthy doctor with a bright future. Halide Edib turns the dynamics of Othello upside down. Behiye, for instance, warns Kasım Şinasi about Sara reminding him of Sara’s immature and impulsive nature. When finally Kasım Şinasi is convinced that Sara is having an affair, her hereditary qualities become ‘gateway into [Kasım Şinasi’s] mind.’

In 1912 during the Balkan Wars, Kasım Şinasi decides to join the war to serve as a doctor. However, his time away is consumed by his blinding jealousy which is fed by Behiye’s constant hints at the relationship between Sara and Sururi’s doctor brother, Kami. What triggers his suspicion the most is that he is surprised by Sara’s decision to work voluntarily as a nurse in the dispensary with Kami. More and more the ideal image shifts from Kasım Şinasi to Sara. While Kasım Şinasi’s ideals of helping society are shadowed by desire for the flesh, Sara devotes herself to helping the sick and wounded. The latter rises spiritually despite her poor hereditary qualities, while the former falls despite his ideal

Halide Edib’s choice of adapting a tragedy, *Othello*, in a naturalist light is a critical and important decision as the mutual points of the two genres point to the transition from a religion-based understanding of destiny and justice to a scientific one. A similar attempt of combining the two literary movements has been made by August Strindberg in his *Miss Julie*. Strindberg explains the meeting points of the two as follows:

She is a victim of the discord which a mother’s ‘crime’ has produced in a family; a victim, too, of the delusions of the day, of circumstances, of her own defective constitution – all of which together are the equivalents of the old-fashioned fate or universal law. The naturalist has wiped out the idea of guilt, but he cannot wipe out the results of an action -punishment, prison, or the fear – and for the simple reason that they remain without regard to his verdict. For fellow-beings that have been wronged are not so good-natured as those on the outside, who have not been wronged at all, can be without cost to themselves. 136

The ending of *Mev 'ut Hüküm* uses determinism to highlight Sara’s fleshly existence and desires. When Behiye, fulfilling the role of Iago, sends Sara’s piece of hair and handkerchief as a proof of Sara’s disloyalty to Kasım Şinasi, Sara does not die as a villain, but as a victim. Kasım Şinasi takes her disloyalty as a sign of her hereditary madness. Hair, used as a sign of femininity in Halide Edib’s works as discussed earlier in the chapter, becomes the proof of her feminine existence. Kasım Şinasi decides to kill her to save her from herself. Possessed by jealousy, he sentences her to death by rationalising his decision through scientific thinking. In 1913, on the night when people of the city are out celebrating the Young Turks’ victory of taking the city of Edirne back, Kasım Şinasi injects morphine into Sara’s blood.

The novel therefore offers an exploration of justice and the order of the world. Sara with her narcissistic preoccupation with her body and with her fleshly desirous existence, is doomed to die. However, the text does not portray her as a villain but as a victim. Like the scene where Kasım Şinasi imagines her rising above the filth due to the purity of her soul, she dies devoting her days to higher ideals through nursing. Kasım Şinasi on the other hand, loses his objectivity entirely when he encounters sexual desire. By removing the racial element from her alteration of *Othello*, Halide Edib utilizes the image of a man who ‘retains beneath the surface the savage passions’137 despite his civilized, ‘ideal’ and objective outlook, to reveal the dangers of sexual desires. The novel in the end fulfils the deterministic laws of nature via Sara’s death while at the same time portraying the

positivist mind’s fall from grace. The ideal image shifts as one is lost in the world of flesh, while the other reaches a ‘higher level’.

Conclusion:
Creating types who become the embodiments of their social groups, Halide Edib creates women who become the objects of desire through narratives which either employ desiring men as their narrator or use their perspectives to narrate about these women. The images of these ‘ideal’ women who are the representatives of ‘true’ characteristics of Turkish society become regulatory ideals. Men’s union with these women is never a physical one. Men are punished for demanding physical unions. Instead they have to rediscover these women and understand their real value. Therefore these texts are about the realization of the values of these women: They represent the ‘soul.’ To deserve them, men have to be recreated as in the case of Ihsan and Ayesha. They have to leave their physical desires behind and devote themselves to the higher ideals of national will. Only then do they deserve to unite with these women physically, mentally and spiritually as in the case of Tatarcık. In other words, these women teach men how to obtain the phallus in order to reach their object of desire.

Illness comes as a narcissistic involvement, as a result of fleshly desire. However, once they devote themselves to bigger ideals, their bodies, too, become healthy. They become healthy not as individuals but as members of the nation. While in Halide Edib’s early novels illness works as a sign of the heroines’ suffering, in her later novels they become explicitly healthy, fit and sporty, representing the qualities of the Turkish nation. What does not change in these novels, however, is the position of heroines as regulative and normative which functions as a tool for the nation-building project.
Chapter 3
The Melodramatization of Bodies: Illness in the Early Republican Turkish Melodramas of Kerime Nadir

As discussed in the earlier chapters, with the foundation of the republic, modernization continued to be the main ideological movement of the country, and a full force modernization required a ‘revolution in everyday life’ with the spirit of the revolution emerging not ‘from Anatolia but from Paris and London, and even, […] from Bern – of all places.’\(^1\) The 1920s in Turkey was therefore no less turbulent than the previous hundred years of the empire, and it witnessed nationalist ideology spreading among people who were officially gathered under the name of the nation-state. ‘Revolution in everyday life’ required people to lead their lives in accordance with the definitions of the ideal citizen of the new Turkish nation. With a secular and nationalist ideology, the ideologues of the new country applied reforms in several fields, from the civil code to everyday clothing, from changing the alphabet into Latin to researching the history of the Turkish race to prove its capacity to be modern and to reveal its role in the history of world civilizations. Such a transition from being subjects of an empire to citizens of a republic heightened the semantic meaning of the bodies of individuals, turning people into People.

This chapter looks at the relationship of melodramas, a highly popular genre in the first half of the twentieth-century in Turkey, to the official state ideology on the bodies of citizens, and discusses how the heightened meanings of physical gestures and characteristics in melodramas correspond to the fattened meanings of the bodies of the members of the nation. First, coined as a term by Rousseau as ‘a type of drama in which words and music, instead of going together, are heard alternately, and where the spoken phrase is, as it were, announced and prepared by the musical phrase’;\(^2\) melodrama was originally a form of stage drama generated from pantomime.\(^3\) In his *The Melodramatic Imagination* Peter Brooks follows the roots of the genre to the French Revolution and its aftermath, and suggests that in a period when the strong positions of church and monarch were dethroned, when what was perceived as sacred was shattered and the hierarchal balance of society was shaken, melodrama was born almost to bring the needed transgressive back into the lives of the people, since genres like the comedy of manners and tragedy were no longer speaking to the people whose perceptions of the deific and

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banal had inevitably changed with the revolution.\textsuperscript{4}

Melodrama does not simply represent a ‘fall’ from tragedy, but a response to the loss of the tragic vision. It comes into being in a world where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been violently thrown into question, yet where the promulgation of truth and ethics, their instauration as a way of life, is of immediate, daily, political concern.\textsuperscript{5}

Similar conditions can be observed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Turkey where the Sultan’s sovereignty was replaced with the people’s, and reforms to ensure modernization and secularization were deployed. The early republican reforms were more easily adapted by the urban middle and upper class populations who had already been leading a mixed lifestyle of Eastern and Western cultures.\textsuperscript{6} The rural populations, however, were mostly resistant to the changes and they were the ones who required a revolution in everyday life.\textsuperscript{7} To spread the ideology among rural populations, People’s Houses were founded where people were educated about this new ‘civilized’ lifestyle.\textsuperscript{8} The subjects that were taught varied from health issues to raising children, from sports to history lessons. Religious affairs were another important part of the reforms. The Sharia courts were closed, followed by the closure of the medreses (religious schools), tarikats (dervish convents) as well as public shrines.\textsuperscript{9} In Ginsborg’s words, ‘Religion was to be organized, if not conducted, by the state’.\textsuperscript{10}

As previously discussed, the social and political upheavals since the Tanzimat period were best reflected in the novel form, with writers utilizing novels for didactic purposes, aiming to educate the masses and warn them against the ills of over-Westernization.\textsuperscript{11} The themes of these early texts usually focused on romantic love stories, and they consisted of a schematic plot line (lovers who were parted due to various villains and ill luck or characters who lost their sense of self due to over-westernization) and characters (who were either completely good or completely bad).\textsuperscript{12} As a result, the ‘melodramatic mode’ which ‘[staged] a heightened and hyperbolic drama, making reference to pure and polar concepts of darkness and light, salvation and damnation’, and

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid, p.15.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Ginsborg, p.113.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
which ‘placed their characters at the point of intersection of primal ethical forces and to confer on the characters’ enactments a charge of meaning referred to the clash of these forces,’ as Peter Brooks defines it, was a natural characteristic of these texts, with writers finding these methods useful for their purpose of attracting the attention of the masses. Under the influence of sentimental writers of the French and English literature such as Victor Hugo, Walter Scott, Charles Dickens and Alexandre Dumas, Tanzimat writers instrumentalized the melodramatic mode for their political agenda.

In the first half of the twentieth-century, melodrama also gained high popularity with the masses. Produced by upper class writers such as Kerime Nadir, Muazzez Tahsin Berkand and Esat Mahmut Karakurt, these texts narrated love stories of the upper class elite, but they did not carry over political agendas. As suggested by Ömer Türkeş in ‘Güdük Bir Edebiyat Kanonu’ (A Deficient Literature Canon), portrayals of ‘modern’ lives of elites in these works were parallel to the ideal image of the new Turkish citizens of the republic. These works portrayed private matters of characters of the same class and of Turkish origin, and thereby revealed an organic bond with the elitist characteristic of the Turkish modernization project. However, while the nationalist literature, as exemplified by Halide Edib, was produced with concerns of propaganda, melodramas of the republic, on the other hand, had organically adopted the Kemalist ideology, using it as a setting rather than mission of the text. While in the previous chapter, Halide Edib’s characters and plots were discussed as the mediums of expression of the writer’s political stance, characters in the melodramas of the republican period were removed from the social realities around them, and the concerns of the plots were private matters of individuals rather than social. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the centre of the nation-building canon through Halide Edib’s works, this chapter looks at the production of the healthy gendered bodies in a popular but dismissed genre, melodrama. Here, we move to the margins of the canon and scrutinize the relationship between official state discourse on illness and how illness is utilized in works of popular culture.

One of the major arguments of this chapter is that melodramas, despite not claiming a social mission, nevertheless functioned as powerful vessels in spreading the Kemalist ideology of the period. As suggested by Türkeş, these works ‘depicted the new [Kemalist]

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13 Brooks, p. ix.
lifestyle’ that was prompted by the state, and promoted them better than social realist works whose production was supported by Mustafa Kemal himself. In other words, these works reflected the new modern lifestyle and taught the masses the new social decorum more successfully than any other work: They were teaching the masses how to be modern in the private realm of romantic relationships.

Illness, as a personal matter, found itself a place in the early examples of Turkish novels as a melodramatic event in a period when the meaning of the flesh changed drastically, as social Darwinism became a powerful discourse in the late Ottoman Empire and as the healthy bodies of citizens started to be treasured for the sake of future generations in the republican Turkey. In other words, with the transference from subjects to citizens, the meanings of bodies were fattened and as suggested by Peter Brooks, melodrama gave an appropriate arena to perform bodies in their new symbolic outfits.

This is not to argue that the body is unimportant in literature before the late 18th century: many examples come to mind, from the Greeks onwards. Certainly in ancien régime France the body, be it the tortured body of the criminal or the sacred body of the king, is very much a part of everyday life and symbolism. But the ancien régime body belongs to a traditional system, a product of both Christian and popular cultures, that is taken for granted. It is when this traditional system is evacuated of meaning by the Revolution that a new aesthetic of embodiment becomes necessary. The loss of a system of assigned meanings is followed by one where meaning must be achieved, must be the product of an active semiotic process which the body is newly emblematised with meaning. The body in early Romantic literature, and thereafter, assumes a new centrality as a site of meaning; during the Revolution, in the popular genre of melodrama, we have a kind of literalistic realisation of this new importance of the body as the site of signification.

It is, therefore, appropriate to interrogate the importance of the place of health and sickness in Turkish melodramas in this regard. While illness was discussed regarding the well-being of the whole Turkish nation by the official ideology, the transgressive meaning of the human body coincided with the transgressive quality of the People of the Turkish nation. As a result, the illness of a character as a melodramatic event in these texts was parallel to the official ideology for which human lives were sacred as they were carriers of the potentiality of the nation, or ‘the master signifier’ in Lacanian terms. Such fattening of the semantic meaning of the bodies finds itself an important place in the melodramatic imagination where meanings are heightened and hyperbolic, where a look or a gaze means

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16 Ibid, p.436.
something more than itself, where death is not simply the death of a character but it is ‘thought in action’, in other words it is the symbol of a character’s qualities and choices. As contended by Brooks, ‘The melodramatic body is a body seized by meaning’. In a period when people became the People, the melodramatic imagination offered a zone of hyperbole and excess.

Following Brooks’ reading of the melodramatic imagination, I argue that the popularity of melodramas in the early republican period of Turkey points to a need to recreate a ‘moral occult’ where justness of the world system, in which the good were rewarded while evil ones were punished, had to be recreated somewhere outside the realm of religion. In this chapter I look at one of the most popular melodrama writers, Kerime Nadir, and her two works, *Hiçkırık* (Sobbing, 1938) and *Posta Güvercini* (Carrier Pigeon/Dove, 1950) in which she utilizes illness as a sign of necessary sacrifice by women to create the moral occult for the heroes to regain their power and find their moral balance. One of my major cornerstones here is Peter Brooks’ reading of melodramas as an expression of anxiety in a changing world. As he argues, ‘melodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue’. Accordingly, I argue that Nadir’s melodramas balance the moral order by raising the hero and sacrificing the heroine: by raising the hero the text heals the nation’s hegemonic masculinity which was wounded due to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, and by killing the heroine the text fulfils and defines women’s ultimate sacrifice for the nation. It is my hypothesis that while these texts portray a crisis in the moral occult as a crisis of masculinity, they solve the crisis through sacrificing the heroines’ lives. The heroines’ Christ-like sacrifice is realised with illness; through the mourning of the heroes after the heroines’ deaths, the passing heroines are carried to a sacred and saintly position. Illness makes them lesser citizens, but more than human.

1. Melodramatic Mode and Melodrama

Traditionally a form of stage production, melodramas originated as plays that used music to highlight the moods of the scenes. The first example was Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Pygmalion* in which ‘while Pygmalion broods in silence, music expresses his dejection; when he speaks, it stops’. Following Rousseau’s footsteps, Georg Benda produced his *Medea* (1775) in which he set his dialogues to music. In order to differentiate this new

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genre from opera, the word *melodrame* was put to use, combining the Greek word *melos* (music) and drama.21 Mimed actions, extensive acting combined with dramatic music made these productions accessible to working class audiences, making them popular in Europe. René Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt’s *Coelina* ‘ran for 387 performances on the Boulevard, was translated into Dutch, German and English, and in 1802 appeared at Covent Garden as *A Tale of Mystery*.22

The musical element of melodramas slowly faded; however, it continued its extensive use of mimics, gestures and hyperbole. As Brooks suggests, mute and disabled characters became important elements of melodramas in time, since they highlighted meaning without the need for dialogue. Characters expressing their emotions by gesturing, according to Brooks, points to a new search for meaning, outside the symbolic system of language: ‘a body that has become the place for the inscription of highly emotional messages that cannot be written elsewhere, and cannot be articulated verbally’.23 Specifically for this reason, however, there is no depth to melodramatic characters. As Robert Bechtold Heilman suggests, unlike tragic characters, melodramatic characters are undivided, they are not confused between two conflicting desires.24 Taking Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex* as a tragedy and Aeschylus’s *The Persians* as a melodrama, James L. Smith compares the two by pointing to the role of hubris in Oedipus’s fall, while Persians are innocent victims without any misdeed.25 The endings of the two genres too differ from each other in terms of dividedness and undividedness, as Smith suggests, ‘In melodrama, we win or lose; in tragedy we lose in winning like *Oedipus Rex* or *Macbeth*, or win in the losing like *Hamlet* or *Antony and Cleopatra*’.26

Suggesting that melodrama is a product of modernity, Peter Brooks connects the birth of melodrama to the changing position of the ‘personal’ after the French Revolution. With positivism replacing spirituality, with people claiming power and dethroning the monarchic sovereign, the sacred, too, was carried into the personal matters of individuals.27 According to Brooks, melodrama filled the gap in society which needed resacralization, and offered sacralization by telling the stories of a moral universe: ‘melodrama is indeed, typically, not only a moralistic drama but the drama of morality: it strives to find, to

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21 Ibid, p.2.
22 Ibid, p.4.
26 Ibid, p.10.
27 Brooks, p.16.
to articulate, to demonstrate, to “prove” the existence of a moral universe which, though put into question, masked by villainy and perversions of judgement, does exist and can be made to assert its presence and its categorical force among “men”\(^\text{28}\). For the melodrama to fulfil its cathartic promise, the virtue of the virtuous character should be shadowed by the villain only to be recovered and revealed in the end. The moment of recognising the virtue of a character is the moment of the birth of the moral occult: the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality\(^\text{29}\).

Like Heilman, Brooks, too, suggests that melodrama is more of a mode than a genre where the signifier signifies something more than the signified. By means of gestures, symbolic words and music, the melodramatic imagination creates heightened meanings. In melodramatic novels, however, the absence of music is compensated by ‘[style], thematic structuring, modulations of tone and rhythm and voice – musical patterning in a metaphorical sense’\(^\text{30}\). As a form that derives its power from hyperbolic meanings, dramatic events and meaningful bodily gestures, the melodramatic mode took a different form in different countries. Looking at its origin, Thomas Elsaesser notes in his famous essay, ‘Tales of Sound and Fury’, that ‘[in] England, it has mainly been the novel and the literary gothic where melodramatic motifs persistently crop up […]’; in France, it is the costume drama and historical novel; in Germany ‘high’ drama and the ballad as well as more popular forms like Moritat (street songs); finally, in Italy, the opera rather than the novel reached the highest degree of sophistication in the handling of melodramatic situations\(^\text{31}\).

As contended by Brooks, the heightened meanings placed onto acting bodies can be read in the context of political transformation since the seventeenth-century. With the power shift from the king to the people, people came to be understood through their titles, as famously argued by Foucault, ‘For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence’.\(^\text{32}\) Biopolitics, in this sense, was the great hyperbole where bodies symbolized more than what they actually were. However, this also brought about the great break, with the signified being more than the signifier itself; this, Slavoj Žižek contends, is a form of symbolic castration.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, p.20.
\(^{29}\) Brooks, Melodramatic Imagination, p.5.
\(^{31}\) Thomas Elsaesser, ‘Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama’ in Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.44.
If a king holds in his hands the scepter and wears the crown, his words will be taken as the words of a king. Such insignia are external, not part of my nature: I don’t own them; I wear them to exert power. As such, they ‘castrate’ me: they introduce a gap between what I immediately am and the function that I exercise (i.e., I am never fully at the level of my function). This is what the infamous ‘symbolic castration’ means. Not ‘castration as symbolic, as just symbolically enacted’ […] but the castration that occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order, assuming a symbolic mandate. Castration is the very gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic mandate that confers on me its ‘authority.’

In this manner, by deriving its power from the gap between the signified and signifier, melodramas reflect a world of hyperboles. In a world where bodies came to be understood as the mind in flesh, melodramas offered them a symbolic sphere to express themselves. In Roberto Esposito’s words, ‘zoe was spiritualized while spirit was biologized’.34

Illness, in melodrama, is the ultimate bodily gesture that expresses the character’s emotions mutely without the need for linguistic signs: ‘melodrama maps these issues out in part by thematising disabled bodies as bodies not only “seized by meaning” but also invested with affect’.35 On the one hand, melodramas are works of art where emotions become physical so much so that a good character’s virtues are materialised as illnesses. Since language fails as a system that conveys a message, the illness of a heroine becomes the ultimate conductor of her feelings. Melodramas, therefore, express excessive meanings in periods of symbolic crisis which could not be expressed by language, but they also produce meanings and reformalize/categorize the elements of crisis.

Women’s disabilities and illnesses produce the ultimate message of the text, but melodramas also define good and bad heroines in terms of their tendency to revolt or not. In Brooks’ words, ‘[political] women, scribbling women, debauched women: they all come together as examples of “the sex” out of control, needing the ultimate correction to conform to what Saint-Just calls the “male énergie” of the Republic’.36 I argue, then, that while women’s sexual desire is what puts the bios or the politicized life in danger since women’s sexuality is what bears the threat of bringing natural life back, only by choosing not to actualize their sexual desires can they be cleansed through sacrifice. In other words, the heroine cannot survive as a fleshly, desirous body. As argued by Katherine Byrne in her *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*, illness heightens the heroines’

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womanliness. The melodramatic text puts the heroine back into the universe of signs and symbols as a dead saint, as a Christ-like figure. Illness, therefore, as a melodramatic event, functions to regulate the uncontrollable natural life-body and opens a place for women in the world of biopolitics as untouchable bodies.

2. Melodramatic Mode and Melodrama in the Early Republican Fiction in Turkey

The birth of the novel in Turkish literature coincided with the shift in power from the Sultan to people of empire. With the Tanzimat receipt the first novelists of Turkish literature adopted the novel as a new literary form and created hybrid works that combined this foreign form with indigenous material.38 Melodrama as a stage production became popular in the upheavals of such transformation with French literature playing a crucial role in the evolution of the theatre in the Ottoman Empire.39 Pixerécourt and Hugo’s works were put on stage, and their plays became models for the emerging Ottoman melodramas. In ‘Melodrama and Comedy: Turkish and Armenian Modern Dramatic Literatures in the Ottoman Empire’ Mehmet Fatih Uslu looks at the first modern dramas of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century comparing Ottoman Turkish and Armenian plays, and argues that the first melodramas by Ottoman playwrights represented the morals of the Tanzimat era, parallel to melodramas serving up the morals of the French Revolution at the beginning of the century. According to Uslu, the villains of the stories symbolized the old traditions and ‘the attack on the love of the young couple was an attack on this demand for change’.40 Melodramas allowed writers to transmit their political message, and also allowed the audience to identify with melodramatic courage and tragedy in a period of unrest.41

Melodrama as a genre also gained popularity from the late 19th century to the mid-1960s in literature in Turkey, and in cinema from the 1960s onwards. These were popular romance novels written by authors who were members of the urban elite and who wrote about the lives of their own class. In their works, characters were not involved in any social problems around them, but were instead overly concerned with private matters. The plotlines mostly took place in the mansions of the elite; characters dressed in European clothes, listened to ‘cazbant’ (jazz bands), and read French literature. Unlike the characters of the

39 Uslu, p.84.
40 Ibid, p.121.
41 Ibid., p.123.
social realist works, as discussed in relation to Halide Edib’s works, the characters of republican melodramas did not sacrifice themselves for a greater good other than love. As Reyhan Tutumlu notes these characters led European lives as the Kemalist state imposed on its citizens; however, the characters of these texts were too concerned with romance and private matters life to be accepted into the Kemalist canon.

Kerime Nadir’s works were among the most popular in this genre. She was born in 1917 to an upper class family, received a Western style education and graduated from Saint Joseph, a French high school. In her memoir, she notes that she received criticism for her choice of subjects in her works which almost always focus on the lives of the upper classes in their mansions. She defends herself by suggesting that those lives were all she knew.

Nadir’s explanation on her choice of subject plays a key role in positioning her texts in the social spectrum. This position played an important role in representing her worries over the social changes both in the early Republican days when she wrote *Hıçkırık* and the period of transformation into a multi-party democracy in 1950 when she published *Posta Güvercini*.

In his introduction to the 2010 edition of *Hıçkırık*, the editor of the series, Selim İleri discusses how a generation of daughters and sons were named Kenan and Handan after the characters of *Hıçkırık* and points to the effect of the novel on the general public.

The publication of *Hıçkırık* brought Nadir such fame that she began to receive fan letters from all over the country, the readership of the newspaper increased and newspapers competed with each other to serialize her other works. Such popularity was especially interesting when the alphabet reform of 1928 is taken into consideration. The circulation of the newspaper had fallen drastically due to the change in alphabet. Literacy numbers were low and mostly limited to certain economic groups who were already educated in European languages and therefore were already familiar with the Latin alphabet.

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42 Güneş, p.70.
44 Ibid, p.86.
46 Selim İleri, ‘*Hıçkırık’a Bırkaç Sayfa...*’ (A Few Pages for *Hıçkırık*..), *Hıçkırık*, (İstanbul: Doğan Yayınları, 2010), p.10. The popularity of the book increased even more when it was adopted into cinema, twice. After its second adaptation in 1950, the members of the Democrat Party regime loved the movie so much that the president of the period, Celal Bayar invited the cast and crew of the movie into Çankaya Köşkü, the official residence of the president. The two time mayor of Istanbul, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay the eugenist agenda of whom has been discussed in the previous chapter, was one of the guests of the evening. Rıza Kırar, *Hürrem Erman: İzlenmemiş Bir Yeşilçam Filmi* (Hürrem Erman: A Yeşilçam Movie that Has Not Been Watched) (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2008), pp.93-94.
elements function to explain the popularity of Nadir’s books among the readers. In a period when even language was not trustworthy, a literary work whose narrative utilizes bodily expressions more than dialogue, functioned to express the anxieties of the people and their need for a new moral occult. Thoughts and words themselves were untrustworthy, whereas bodily descriptions, sick-chambers and accelerating heartbeats were enough to depict love and sacrifice.

However, despite its popularity and influence as a novel of manners that could teach readers how to be modern, there was still something not-so-perfect about the narrated lifestyles. Both in *Hiçkırık* and its follow-up *Posta Güvercini*, women suffer from tuberculosis and cancer, respectively, without ever uniting with their lovers. Men, on the other hand, are never depicted as mature adults: both stories are also the stories of their boyhoods and the stories evolve as they discover their sexuality. Despite their similarities, there is also a dramatic difference between the two texts. The main plot of *Posta Güvercini* follows the lines of *Hiçkırık*, however, the hero’s love for the heroine is narrated as a symptom of a psychopathologic problem; his obsession with her and his constant melancholy are described as the signs of his mental illness. Even though in her memoir, Nadir describes *Posta Güvercini* as the novel she started working on with the hope of writing another moving love-story like *Hiçkırık*, *Posta Güvercini* problematizes the hero’s love too much to be a fulfilling romantic story. *Hiçkırık* is the tragic love story of Kenan and Nalan, whereas *Posta Güvercini* is the tragic story of the heroine, Şahizer and the hero’s obsession with her. The focus, too, changes. The title, *Hiçkırık*, ‘sobbing’, points to the sadness of Kenan over losing Nalan. However, *Posta Güvercini*, ‘the carrier pigeon/dove’, points to Ecem, Şahizer’s younger companion who later marries İskender and with whom she had a child. The hero eventually realizes that it has been Ecem all along, the object of his desire. In this second book, Nadir condemns the obsession over the diseased heroine and celebrates the new woman as the only possible solution for the hero’s individuation.

Therefore, the dynamics of Nadir’s novel cannot be explained only as ‘newspeak’ of Kemalist ideology or worthless pulp fiction made up of cheap tears that was consumed...
by masses. These two narratives reflect the cultural meanings of illness and disability in an era which defined itself as the republic of healthy, fit and sturdy citizens. They also reflect the struggle to regain hegemonic masculinity by portraying Kenan and İskender as almost men, but not quite. Finally, these stories mark the end of an era: the end of the comfortable living of the Istanbul elite. Taking place in the first fifteen years of the 20th century, the depiction of the old mansions, melancholia, extreme sensuality, women melting away with sickness and men haunted by the past, lament an era that was fast disappearing.

3. Masculinity as a Crisis in the Moral Order: Almost a Man, But Not Quite

Cemil Meriç defined the Europeanization of Turkey as one experienced not in ‘war zones’ but in ‘bedrooms’. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the restlessness that followed the Tanzimat period as a power crisis represented itself as a crisis in masculinity in the first novels of Turkish literature. The first novels of the era reflected former Ottomans’ worries of losing their identity along with their virility.

Since empires in their glory were often presented as a vindication of virile manhood, the trauma brought about by their disintegration involves a loss of masculinity and being castrated: post-Ottoman Turkey is devalued and emasculated by the fall of the empire. [Ahmet Hamdi] Tanpınar was the first Turkish writer to elaborate on this narrative of the end of the empire using a Freudian lexicon. He defined the reform period (the Tanzimat period, 1839–76), which was characterized by the central Ottoman administration’s attempts to modernize, as patricide: ‘If I may be so rash, I would say that we are all living in a kind of Oedipus complex since Tanzimat; we feel, in a sense, that we have unintentionally murdered our father’.

Here, for a further explanation of loss of empire as a masculinity crisis I will draw on Çimen Günay-Erkol’s term, liminal masculinity. Victor Turner’s definition of liminality plays an important role in Günay-Erkol’s theorising. Looking at communities in transition, Turner defines the process as a liminal process. Recalling Van Gennep’s definition of the rites of passage in three phases: ‘separation, margin (or limen, signifying ‘threshold’ in Latin) and aggregation’ Turner defines the second phase between separation (or change from a former state) and aggregation (or recurring stability) as the liminal phase where things are ‘ambiguous’, people or entities are ‘neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’.

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According to Günay-Erkol the masculinity crisis of the former male subjects of the empire can be defined as a ‘liminal masculinity’, since it positions itself in a passage of transition. Caught between the phase of separation from the empire and stability of the new Turkey, the Turkish masculinity is constantly in the state of not-yet, in other words constantly in a state of trauma:

I refer to the stages of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the modernization of its culture as traumatic, and I refer to trauma as an incomplete confrontation with the past. The incompleteness of the confrontation frames the state of being betwixt and between.53

The sexual crisis that was caused by the loss of the Ottoman Empire and modernization process has been approached as a crucial point to understand the dynamics of the first Turkish novels, by critics such as Nurdan Gürbilek, (Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe (Blind Mirror, Lost Orient: Literature and Anxiety), 2011), Ayşe Saracgil (Il maschio camaleonte. Strutture patriarcali nell’impero ottomano e nella Turchia moderna (Chameleon Man: Structure of Patriarchal Structure in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey), 2001), Bülent Somay (The Pscyhopolitics of the Oriental Father: Between Omnipotence and Emasculation, 2014), Jale Parla (Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri (Fathers and Sons: The Epistemological Foundations of the Tanzimat Novel), 1990), and Çimen Günay-Erkol (‘Post-imperial crises and liminal masculinity in Orhan Kemal’s My Father’s House-The Idle Years’, 2012) since it pointed to the mutual characteristic of ‘being European’ and ‘being a man’ as a masquerade. As Revathi Krishnaswamy suggests, ‘The cult of masculinity rationalized imperial rule by equating an aggressive, muscular, chivalric model of manliness with racial, national, cultural, and moral superiority’.54 Losing the imperial rule, therefore, created an anxiety of emasculation. Accordingly, the breaking down of the Ottoman Empire (Somay defines this as amputation), accepting the advancement of the Western powers and seeing them as worthy of mimicry, caused the subjects of the late Ottoman Empire to also reconsider their self-description. The Ottoman Sultan as the father figure was now not a figure to admire. The figure to look up to was another power, Europe. This undoubtedly created the feeling of impotence among the subjects who once considered themselves to be the ultimate power of the world. Their power was now castrated and emasculated. The problem was no longer about winning or losing battles, but rather the problem was now embodied in their

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53 Günay-Erkol, p.250.
The crisis of masculinity as a problem of author-ity in *Tanzimat* novels has been discussed by Jale Parla and Nurdan Gürbilek in terms of Harold Bloom’s formulation of the anxiety of influence. In this work, Bloom examines poetry after the Enlightenment and looks at the relationship between the ‘new poet’ and their precedents, arguing that when a poet looks at a predecessor’s works for inspiration, such an act of looking back and interpreting leads to a form of misinterpretation.\(^5\) It is a one-way communication with the imaginary father who came before and still haunts the Poet Son. Taking on a Freudian path, Bloom recalls ‘the uncanny’ as the ultimate feeling behind the anxiety of repeating what has been done and said before, ‘poetry is the anxiety of influence, is misprision, is a disciplined perverseness’.\(^6\)

Moving from the idea of every poet as a ‘latecomer’, Gürbilek suggests that it becomes particularly tricky when the feeling of being later than the precursor is felt for a precursor who is a stranger/foreigner/other or, in the case of Ottoman novelists, a European. What happens when the Poet Parent is not the parent that you looked up to for centuries? How do you claim to be unique and original when you can only be that by mimicking a European? Homi Bhabha discusses such mimicry in the case of India in his *The Location of Culture*. However, his suggestion also marks the crisis of the Ottoman intellectuals of the time: ‘the desire to emerge as “authentic” through mimicry – through a process of writing and repetition – is the final irony of partial representation’.\(^7\)

Gürbilek takes the anxiety of not being ‘authentic’ and suggests that female characters in the early Ottoman novels are there to represent this problem: the women of the novels read books like *Monte Cristo, Paul and Virgine, The Lady of the Camellias, Graziella* and *Manon Lescaut*, misinterpret what they read, and lead themselves to tragic ends by imitating the European lives they read about and forgetting who they really are.\(^8\)

Thereby, she contends, as most authors of the first Turkish novels were men, their female characters represented the ills of a misguided interpretation of modernization. They functioned as a warning for the reader.

When male characters were portrayed as the misinterpreters of Europeanization, however, it was not there as a threat but rather as something to mock, to ridicule. *Araba Sevdası* (A Carriage Affair) by Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem is one of the most famous

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\(^6\) Ibid, p.95.


\(^8\) Gübilek, p.38.
examples of this kind in Turkish literature. The novel tells the story of Bihruz Bey, a dandy who falls in love with a woman, because he actually falls in love with her European-style car and clothes. He is the ultimate symbol of adopted/translated and shallow modernity. Bihruz Bey is portrayed as effeminate and delusional. His reality is formed by books and he is too captivated by them to distinguish the reality around him. Şerif Mardin discusses the reasons behind the creation of these dandy characters who mostly exist in the novels of Young Ottomans who supported the modernization project as a form of development but were still attentive to Islamic traditions. Their reaction towards the likes of Bihruz Bey was due to their criticism of European lifestyles that the Ottoman elite sought:

*Araba Sevdasi* [A Carriage Affair] satirizes the superficial veneer of Westernization which a new class has adopted in Turkey after the passing of the edict of reform of 1839. This class, that of the *Tanzimat* grandees, had liberated itself from the shackles of a slave bureaucracy and had taken into its own hands the reins of the modernization movement. To have one’s head securely fixed on one’s shoulder with no fears that an imperial order would make it roll, to have one’s property protected by the laws of the land, these were new features in the *Tanzimat*. By the 1870s, the inevitable had happened: the second generation of the new class succumbed to the softness and protectiveness of an urban life over which it ruled unchallenged.

Mardin suggests that Bihruz Bey is a similar character to Oblomov of the Russian novelist Ivan Goncharov’s novel with the same title, since both ‘suffer from the same species of civilization disease: a lack of identity and of roots’. Mardin calls this ‘Bihruz Bey syndrome’. According to him, the reaction towards Bihruz Bey ‘types’ was the signifier of the tension between traditional and religious public culture vs. the rich *Tanzimat* elite. He notes, ‘As a group [the Young Ottomans] had been kept in the lower ranks of executive positions’, therefore the tension was created by not only religious roots of the public life but also it was inevitably economical, too. Also, the communitarian culture of the Ottoman public had found the new liberal ways of the bureaucratic elite strange. As a result

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60 An example of his delusions occurs, for instance, when he learns that the woman in the carriage is from Kadikoy, a province of Istanbul: ‘He could not for all his good will associate the landau with Kadikoy. For as a result of some unusual thoughts shaped by his commerce with *alafranga* gentlemen, he had divided the various quarters of the city into three classes: the first inhabited by the *noblesse* [Mardin’s note: ‘in French in the text’] that is to say by aristocratic or refined, *civilisé* beings like himself, the second inhabited by the bourgeois class, uncouth persons of middling status without as much knowledge of civilized thought, the third inhabited by crafts persons. In this classification he had placed Kadikoy, which of right should have been in the first category, in the second.’ Cited and translated by Mardin, p. 408.
61 Mardin, pp.403-446.
62 Şerif Mardin, p.407.
63 Ibid, p.409.
64 Ibid, p.425.
the tension between the general public and Ottoman bureaucrats was also a tension between tradition and Europeanism. Even though they were excluded from the financial privileges from which the ruling class benefited, the first novelists, the Young Ottomans as ‘specialised communicators’ in the Translation Bureau of the Porte had been through Western education and through their knowledge of French understood the nuances of European culture even better than the Tanzimat elite. All this made them critical of the superficial Europeanization of the elite. Having been left out of the privileges, they were also surrounded by the public traditional culture and knew how to ‘gather popular forces behind their social policies and their political banner.’\textsuperscript{65} As Zürcher suggests, ‘The Young Ottomans were a small group within the ruling elite, whose organized activities spanned no more than five years’.\textsuperscript{66} However, their impact on the intellectual and political life was immense. Through the publication of various newspapers, journals and novels, the Young Ottomans influenced public opinion and indirectly affected the Ottoman constitution in 1876.\textsuperscript{67} The creation of a Bihruz Bey typology in the novels was one of their devices to criticize the ruling class.\textsuperscript{68}

According to Mardin, Bihruz Bey is a repeated trope in the nineteenth and the twentieth-century of Turkish literature and they ‘appear as traitors to their culture, whose example is to be shunned’.\textsuperscript{69} While criticising the Europeanised elite, however, writers were using a very European device to do so: novels. Their criticism towards the extreme forms of westernization was only safe and possible through making a European literary form local. They criticised Bihruz Bey by performing Bihruz Bey himself. Therefore the narrative in these texts was always didactic with the narrator dominating the text with his interferences. Since their writing was born out of their concerns over the lack of authority, writers did not feel the need to hide the authoritarian voice in their texts. The author was quite openly interfering with the story.

According to Gürbilek, by creating women who misinterpreted modernization, these writers were taking a few steps back from their own fears of influence. Their male dandies who had misread European literature and had turned into a hybrid of two cultures, on the other hand, were portrayed as immature sons who had not masculinised fully.\textsuperscript{70} This, according to Gürbilek, was the ‘anxiety of effemination’: a concern over the perceived lack

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Zürcher, p.73.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, 74.
\textsuperscript{68} Mardin, p.425.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, p.412.
\textsuperscript{70} Gürbilek, p.55.
of masculine authority in their texts. In other words, the anxiety of being influenced by the Father Writer had gained strength when it was added to the anxiety of being influenced by ‘the other’. As Gürbilek noted, this anxiety was not only limited to writing. Whenever there was a criticism of forgetting one’s roots, this was expressed by accusation of ‘losing one’s ‘virilité’. Gürbilek suggests that even though there is a crowded population of women characters who become dandies due to over-Europeanization, it is actually men who go through the experience of the anxiety of effeminacy; if it is the woman who is Europeanised, then the worry of the man is to regain the woman’s respect once again and prove his hegemonic masculinity.

However, this new modern life did not simplify things for men since it reshaped the expectations of men and women’s behaviours. Accordingly, it was a common complaint by male authors that women took the demands of housework as an insult and that they preferred to read novels all day. As Alan Duben and Cem Behar suggest, the complaints about new families and the behaviour of new women were about ‘the Ottoman bureaucratic or commercial classes, the classes most directly influenced by westernization,’ since ‘the writers themselves came from such backgrounds’.

The upper classes of the late Ottoman Empire were not the only ones who felt threatened by the habits of these new women or the changes in society. In the very same period, Europe, too, was feeling threatened by the shift. Such anxiety was making itself felt most in the discourse of colonialization. In his Make Me a Man! Sikata Banerjee notes, ‘Christian manliness and muscular Christianity arose in response to industrialization and the uncertainties created by a changing social order wherein race and gender roles were shifting’. The heroic literature that celebrated manhood in Victorian Britain was a product of such worries and the ideology of Christian masculinity exercised its hegemony in

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71 Ibid, 56.
72 Ibid, 66.
colonial spaces. Banerjee notes that the definitions of Christian manliness ‘emerged in the mid-century when British imperial power was at its zenith and drew upon various traits – self-control, discipline, confidence, martial prowess, military heroism, and rationality – expressed in the typology of hegemonic masculinity’. The very same hegemonic masculinity that was deeply rooted in the imperial pride was, however, wounded in the Ottoman Empire and only after winning the Independence War, when people reclaimed their hegemonic power in the name of a nation, was it going to be regained. ‘The liminal masculinity’ in Günay-Erkol’s terms, however, didn’t end after the foundation of the republic, since modern Turkey had traits that had previously been found emasculating. The loss of the Ottoman Empire which was a symbol of patriarchal hegemony was to adopt a modern lifestyle with new clothing and eating habits and new family definitions. Whereas these were the main elements that were thought to be emasculating for men previously. Mardin explains the reason for that very clearly: ‘The Republican ideology incorporated certain Bihruz traits. This appears in Atatürk’s disgust for the fez, in his proscribing of a la Turca music and in his laicism. He, too, thought that baggy pants were part of a carnival. But he was anti-Bihruz at the deeper level of his support for a populistic ideology and a nationist activism which is not so far removed from the activities of the Ghazi, of which, quite fittingly, he was one’. True, the Ottoman Empire was never colonised. However, as Bülent Somay suggests, ‘colonial or pseudo-colonial mimicry (“Oriental Transvestitism”) was in effect, in full force all the same’. It was borrowed and mimicked. The partial mimicking of Europeanization was creating anxiety: in 1925 the Hat Drive was declared, meaning that every fez and other traditional headgear were to be banned and every male subject was to wear from then on a European hat. However, in addition to the public struggle to adapt to the change rapidly, the implementation of a law that demanded every man obtain a European-style hat resulted in an actual shortage of hats. The result was this:

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75 Banerjee, p.23.
76 Banerjee, p.23.
77 Mardin, p. 440.
78 Somay, p.81.
79 Ibid, p. 133.
European hat-makers reaped a golden harvest. Shiploads of fedoras, panamas, caps – whatever was available – were hurried to Istanbul. The Italian Borsalino Brothers had a loaded ship right at Istanbul port; they rushed everything on it through customs and made a huge profit. And that was not all - Istanbul lived as if in a permanent carnival for a time: men went around with paper hats, and sometimes ladies’ hats on their heads.80

As the crisis of modernity was felt most powerfully as a crisis of masculine hegemony in the country, saving the nation and deserving the heroine were both matters of manhood. The melodramatic mode in the Turkish novels served to the nation-building process and portrayed the rebirth of the Turkish masculinity. But at what cost?

5. Hıckarık: The Recreation of the Masculine Moral Occult

Hıckarık brought national fame to Kerime Nadir after being serialized in 1937 and published as a book in 1938. The story-line takes place between the early 1900s, when Kenan is a seven-year-old boy, and 1923, the victorious end of the Turkish Independence War. The story begins when the hero, Kenan, loses his mother. The loss of the mother points to the Bildungsroman characteristic of the text, since the story follows the growth of Kenan, and his individuation. Franco Moretti suggests that the process of normalization defines the main characteristic of Bildungsroman. As Meltem Gürle writes, Moretti’s sense of normalization is very much in line with Hegel’s Phenomenology according to which ‘individual consciousness is involved in a process of Bildung (formation/education) with the goal of attaining knowledge of itself, not as an ‘I’ but as a ‘we’, that is to say, as part of a collective entity’.81 For Moretti, the normalization of a hero is where the hero does not only obey the social norms, but thoroughly internalizes them. Moretti calls this ‘comfort of civilization’.82 Bildungsroman is one of the closest meeting points of the private and the social. The growth of the hero according to a given time-line fits within the progressive ideology of modernity and presents the hero as the symbol of a modern man.

In his Unseasonable Youth, Jed Etsy touches on what is left undiscovered in Moretti’s formulation in The Way of the World, the symbolic function of nationhood: ‘…the discourse of nationhood supplies the realist Bildungsroman with an emergent language of historical continuity or social identity amid the rapid and sweeping changes of

80 Paneth, cited by Somay, p. 136.
industrialization’.

It is, therefore, highly significant that in 1937, in the heyday of the Turkish republic’s ideology of progression, Kerime Nadir chose to write about becoming of a hero from before the Balkan Wars, the final death knell and the fatal amputation of the Ottoman Empire, to the end of the Turkish Independence War, the day that the post-Ottomans reclaimed their hegemonic power as the Turkish nation. What we have, as a result is ‘an image of man growing in national-historical time’. I argue that reading Kenan’s process of Bildung from a psychoanalytical perspective will shed light on the crisis in his individuation on both private and social levels.

For Lacan, the symbolic realm of the language plays a major role in the process of individuation. Accordingly, the Oedipus complex, the child’s desire for the mother which leads to the figuration of the father as the rival, is a phase of transformation from the imaginary order to the symbolic, and is finalized with the child’s obtaining the phallus as a signifier. Such an argument defines the symbolic in connection to sexuation, as ‘the subject cannot have access to the symbolic order without confronting the problem of sexual difference’.

Only with the use of the symbolic order whose master signifier is the Name-of-the-Father can the child obtain the symbolic phallus and enter into the realm of Law and taboos. As Lacan argues, ‘the Oedipus complex is essential for the human being to be able to accede to a humanized structure of the real’. By entering the realm of the symbolic order, however, the child’s unconscious is shaped by the Law, and is ‘structured like a language’. In other words, self only becomes possible by internalising the law: ‘This fundamental signifier both confers identity on the subject (it names him, positions him within the symbolic order) and signifies the Oedipal prohibition, the ‘no’ of the incest taboo’. Revealing of Kenan’s melancholic character points to a crisis in individuation in minor scheme and his process of Bildung in the major social context of Turkey.

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87 Right after Kenan loses his mother he finds out that his mother’s husband is not his actual father. Kenan’s fatherlessness is quite similar to the worries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, since with the sultan’s authority in question, writers at the time, as suggested by Parla, found themselves in the position of sons who felt guideless and lost without the sultan’s authority. In 1937, at the time when Nadir was working on her text, the position of the new father Atatürk was also in danger, as his illness surfaced. In 1938, Atatürk died from the same illness after spending a year in his sick chamber in Dolmabahçe Palace. It is not possible to strictly claim that this detail affected the text. However, it should be taken into consideration as one of the main determinants of the broader social context behind the popularity of the text among the public. The resurfacing worries over fatherlessness and later on Kenan’s unending mourning over Nalan, I argue, can be
After finding out that his father on paper is not his biological father, he is adopted by a man and is brought to his mansion in Istanbul. While Kenan’s is the story of growth, the life that he is brought to is in decay. In other words, Kenan, an outsider to the life in Istanbul has the potential to rise from the ashes of the decay unlike the original members of that life. The mansion, for instance, is a highly significant setting since, with the foundation of the new republic, the period of the Ottoman elite’s rich lives in Istanbul mansions was about to come to an end. The communitarian Ottoman way of life was the best fit for mansion life where people lived with their extended family members. However, with the rapid change in the economy, mansions were demolished and replaced by apartment blocks. After the 1910s in particular, the economic conditions of the Ottoman elite were under threat due to high inflation and low fixed wages and salaries. The war had also affected families deeply, described as a ‘family crisis’ by Duben and Behar: With the men taken to the war zone, women had to work for the first time. The elite’s extravagant mansion lives were about to end.

This was in many ways the end of an era for the old bureaucratic elite, articulated in the novels and in our interviews as the ‘end of konak [mansion] life’. The demise of konak life is seen as a great watershed by old Istanbul residents when they look back into their past. Something was lost for them that could never again be regained - something both material and social. Difficult economic circumstances during and after the war forced many of these people to sell or subdivide into apartment flats the large, often magnificent wooden homes that had not only been their residences, but which had been symbols of their superior status in society. For the elite, the demise of their homes was the core of the ‘family crisis’. Nadir, writing in 1937 was very aware of the forthcoming end of ‘mansion life’, and her mourning for this period reveals itself through the heroine, Nalan, portrayed as the embodiment of life at the mansions. She is the daughter of the owner of one such mansion and she is a few years older than Kenan. She is portrayed as a highly energetic but sensitive child who enjoys European style music, plays piano, and speaks French; but, to her father’s concern, is also interested in Ottoman style music and culture. She secretly goes to a mixed-gender European style party, but she also secretly goes to a traditional Ottoman lude player’s house to listen to his music. She is almost the embodiment of the Istanbul of mansions, of Ottoman elite whose destinies were ambiguous both in the pre-war period and later on with the Kemalist regime gradually turning its back to the elite and Istanbul to celebrate the rural populations of Anatolia as well as the Anatolian industry.

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88 Duben and Behar, p. 200.
89 Ibid, pp.200-201.
Nalan, on the other hand, is a member of Istanbul elite and her fragile health is directly related to the city. Her health, for instance, is often reenergised when lilacs bloom in the city.

In the scene where Kenan and Nalan first meet, the power hierarchy in their relationship is established immediately. Feeling shy in front of Nalan’s friends, Kenan hides himself behind Nalan’s skirt. Nalan directly adopts the role of an older sister as well as a mother replacement and the two grow up as siblings. Kenan’s brotherly or rather son-like love for Nalan turns into a romantic one as they become teenagers. However, no matter how many years pass, Kenan cannot escape being the *not yet mature man* of the story. Nalan often accuses him of being childish, not yet being a man. Kenan whose name literally means ‘promised land, heaven, Palastine’, is childish since he is portrayed as a romantic and melancholic character trapped in his own consciousness and out of touch with reality. Nalan’s mother-like position in his life makes him obsessed with her, wishing to both unite with and consume her.

In ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ Sigmund Freud focuses on the differences between mourning and melancholy and highlights the self-hatred of the subject who suffers from melancholy as opposed to the person who is going through a period of mourning. According to Freud, mourning is considered to be a ‘normal’ process for the subject who re-shapes and re-defines parts of their memory and forms of thinking to assess every connection that the brain creates to the lost object. Once the process is over, the subject manages to move on. However, the subject cannot move on from melancholy as according to Freud, melancholy is much more internalized and associated with the subject’s self-definition. The melancholic projects the hatred of the other which occurs as a defence mechanism generated from the fear of loss of the other and experiences it as self-hatred, since the other has been internalized: it is easier to devour the other than bear the risk of losing it (‘the melancholy cannibalistic imagination’). However, this leads to hatred towards the other within the self, since the ego and the object of love are now one and same. According to Freud this is what makes melancholy so hard to cease as opposed to mourning: losing the object means losing one’s ego. While Freud’s object of loss can be anything – namely, a thing, a person or an idea – Julia Kristeva takes Freud’s notion and defines mother as the Thing that is lost, that is sought after by the melancholic like a ‘sun, bright and black at the same time’ that will never be entirely seen and whose absence leads

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91 Ibid, p.311.
the subject first into silence and as a result, death.\(^{92}\)

The melancholy person who extols that boundary where the self emerges, but also collapses in deprecation, fails to summon the anality that could establish separations and frontiers as it does normally or as a bonus with obsessive persons. On the contrary, the entire ego of those who are depressed sinks into a diseroticized and yet jubilatory anality, as the latter becomes the bearer of a jouissance fused with the archaic Thing, perceived not as a significant object but as the self’s borderline element.\(^{93}\)

Accordingly, Kenan’s desire for Nalan, too, points to a crisis in his individuation. He declines to have a life outside his relationship with Nalan. He often rests his head on her chest and he always wishes to return to his childhood days with her. His sexual desire for Nalan is one that wishes to unite and to consume. Throughout the story, Kenan constantly battles against his sexual desires towards Nalan. However, these scenes can never be explicitly verbalized by him. His desire for Nalan is almost too archaic to be expressed in words. As a result, he describes his cheeks reddening, his heartbeats accelerating, and tells us that he feels like fainting. Putting his head onto her breast or onto her knees is a repeated action in their daily dynamics. He is at a loss for words and his sense of self whenever his head falls onto Nalan’s chest. In his own words:

> A feeling of fainting has passed through me as if I was falling from somewhere high. It was the first time I had put my head on Nalan’s breasts for years. I was half unconscious. My ears were listening to her heartbeats.\(^{94}\)

Nalan, however, gets married to İlhami, her doctor. Nalan accepts his proposal partly to help Kenan forget his feelings about her. While she defines Kenan’s feelings as ‘childish’ and Kenan as not yet a fully grown man, she defines herself as too unhealthy to unite with such a promising, healthy young man. Kenan’s teenage love for her, however, does not cease but rather turns into a sexual obsession as the years pass. His tantrums, caused by sexual frustration, gain power. He tries to rape her, but is stopped by Nalan’s coughing and trembling. Kenan’s masculine desire to consume Nalan is achieved by Nalan’s consumptive disease. Their first kiss, for instance, coincides with the first time Nalan’s tuberculosis shows itself. As if symbolising Kenan’s virginity, Nalan coughs blood on the white sheets after Kenan kisses her for the first time.

> When Kenan becomes a grown man, Nalan’s condition becomes more and more


\(^{93}\) Ibid, p.15.

\(^{94}\) Nadir, *Hiçkırık*, p.92.
fragile. One gains strength as the other loses it. The power dynamics shift rapidly. While early on in the story Nalan is depicted as a mature young woman and Kenan as an immature young man, later on, Kenan becomes a healthy and strong soldier and Nalan a weak but saintly damsel in distress. She is now ‘part angel, part whore’ who is ‘the image of alluring sexuality on display, but made passive, subservient and manageable by illness’. The process is almost completed. Kenan is ‘normalized’ in the Morettian sense. Almost, but not quite.

The text is not often explicit about the dates except in two events: One of them is the year Nalan dies, 1912. This year is crucial in the history of the Ottoman Empire since it is the year that the Balkan Wars started. The effects of the loss of the war were unlike any other loss, since according to Zürcher, ‘the areas lost (Macedonia, Albania, Thrace) had been core areas of the empire for over 500 years’. Historian A. L Macfie’s describes the lethal results of the loss of the Balkan Wars at length:

The year Nalan dies is the year that the Ottoman Empire’s symbolic hegemony ceases to exist. After Nalan’s death Kenan joins the First World War and fights in the Caucasus front. With the leadership of Enver Pasha, this front later evolved into the main army to fight the Turkish Independence War. In other words, while Kenan spends months mourning in a hospital as the Balkan Wars conclude, he ends up fighting at one of the fronts that would later on be responsible for the foundation of the new Turkey. However, the text never actually narrates him fighting. He later on explains that he is wounded in various places but suggests that nothing pains him as much as Nalan’s death.

The nationalist, progression-centred and eugenicist agenda of the Kemalist state and its gender definitions are in full force in Hıçkırk as Nalan devotes her life and her

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95 Byrne, pp. 33-34.
96 Zürcher, p.114.
health to raising Kenan. Such ‘duty’ of women was also very typical in the heyday of modernity in Britain as can be seen in Victorian novels. An example is Mrs Humphry Ward’s *Eleanor* in which Eleanor supports Manisty’s book with her ideas and research, and simultaneously devotes her life to his happiness only to die of consumption and replaced by her close friend, a young American girl named Lucy. In Henry James’ *Wings of a Dove*, Milly Theale’s death is the only way for Merton Deshner to receive Milly’s inheritance and become rich enough to marry Kate Croy. Like Ward’s Eleanor, George du Maurer’s *Trilby* or James’ Milly, Nalan, too, devotes her life to revivifying her chosen mate’s masculine energies. In Bram Dijkstra’s words in his *Idols of Perversity*:

> Death became a woman’s ultimate sacrifice of her being to the males she had been born to serve. To withhold from them this last gesture of her exalted servility was, in a sense, an act of insubordination, of ‘self-will.’ [...] The cultural apotheosis of the consumptive sublime, as Woolson clearly indicates, represented the socially ritualized acceptance by the middle-class woman of the prevailing concept that she must transfer the essence of her well-being, symbolically her ‘jewel,’ the fragile lily of her virtue, to her chosen mate to help revivify his moral energies. This principle of ‘spiritual’ transference came more and more to be ‘validated’ by the wife’s physical, and hence visible (again in Veblen’s terms ‘conspicuous’), degeneration.\(^{98}\) Death is her ultimate sacrifice to the man she was born to serve, but by doing so she also serves the nation by raising new generations. *Hıçkırık*, therefore, is the story of the heroine raising the hero, or the story of the heroine healing the hero’s hegemonic masculinity. For the newly founded Turkish republic in transition, which was redefining its hegemonic masculinity definition, Kenan and Nalan were fulfilling their citizenship duties on paper perfectly. Once the hero becomes an adult, back on his feet, reborn, the heroine is too sick to unite with him. Kenan’s fit, well-chosen mate, therefore, has to be as healthy as himself when he is ready as fully grown man.

The second specific date in the text is Kenan’s return to Istanbul after Nalan’s death and after the Turkish army wins the Independence War. Kenan enters Istanbul with the victorious troops of the national army, as a fully grown and mature man. He is now ‘man’ enough to deserve the heroine. The completion of his transition is rewarded by the text too, when Kenan sees Nalan’s daughter, Handan for the first time. Handan grows up to be an exact look-alike of her mother, and replaces her mother. This daughter is defined as a healthier, purer, more innocent and younger version of Nalan: a perfect match for the newly resurrected hero. Nancy Chodorow’s formulation of the mother-daughter

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relationship in individuation functions as a useful model in order to explain the figuration of Nalan and Handan’s relationship. Chodorow argues that ‘mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves,’ and adds, ‘correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship itself’.99 Nalan’s daughter, Handan, too, is a continuation of her mother and she is very aware of her role. She looks exactly like her mother, she wears her mother’s lilac perfume and when she decides to be with Kenan she says: ‘The only woman who can make Kenan happy is [my mother] in me’.100

Suggesting that imperial trauma also sheds light on the trauma that is caused by the loss of the empire, Çimen Günay-Erkol writes, ‘the loss of Ottoman imperial power, in other words, became an abiding source of anxiety within the Turkish idea of political authority’.101 She takes a step further in her analysis and also reads what she calls ‘Turkish post-Ottoman trauma’ as a war-zone between ‘empire as a patriarchal representation of hegemonic masculinity’ and nation states as challengers of ‘the hegemony of the father’s rule. The text reveals the ‘hungry masculinity’ of the new Turkish citizen, whose manhood demands healing, being re-born and being raised. However, once he is an adult, he needs a young and healthy daughter of the republic to accompany him. Nalan’s daughter is the new generation of women who are there to breed, to give birth to healthy new generations. The healthy, sturdy, fit generation is embodied in Kenan and Handan as they hold their baby and walk towards the bright future. Again though, at what cost?

In the opening scene of the novel, we see Kenan and his wife Handan going to the cemetery. The narrator of this section is a retired soldier who would like to learn where this couple goes and for whom they mourn. He follows them to the cemetery, watches Kenan as he cries on a grave. Once he introduces himself to the couple, he becomes good friends with Kenan and is invited to their mansion. There he sees a big photo-portrait of a woman, mistakes her for Kenan’s wife, but Kenan explains him that the woman in the photo died fifteen years ago and that he still mourns for her every day. To explain it further, Kenan gives his diary to the man and the rest of the story proceeds as Kenan’s diary. The whole narrative is an act of remembrance, mourning for the dead woman. Even fifteen years after her death, Nalan still haunts Kenan from her photo-portrait on the wall and Kenan still mourns for her.

101 Günay-Erkol, p.246.
Hıçkırık, therefore, does not bury the dead and move on. It mourns, remembers and is haunted by it. The melancholy of the text functions to deal with the traumatic disengagement from the Ottoman Empire. As Brooks suggests, the melodrama functions to recreate the moral occult, the previous moral system whose balance has been shifted by the revolution. It also creates a clear definition, role and purpose for women and illness. Illness stops the heroine from uniting with the hero. She is not given the opportunity to procreate with the hero. Finally, illness also defines woman’s role in the newly founded state: the only way for her to exist in the symbolic system of the republic is by being the sacrificial nurturer. By doing so, she is carried back to the symbolic system as a saint who is less than a citizen but more than a human. She is included in the system only by being excluded.

6. Posta Güvercini: Hypermascility

Twelve years after the publication of Hıçkırık, Kerime Nadir published Posta Güvercini, a novel whose plot broadly follows that of Hıçkırık but with a shift in its focus: Posta Güvercini does not narrate a romantic love story but rather a story of melancholy that turns into a pathological obsession. In his reading of Hamlet, Jacques Lacan contends that ‘The tragedy of Hamlet is the tragedy of desire’, pointing to the play as one about Oedipal crisis. In this chapter, I argue that the hero of Posta Güvercini, too, suffers from a Hamletesque tragedy in which the hero places his desire on the mother figure while ignoring the love of another, Ecmel. The hero’s exit from the Oedipal Complex, however, is only actualized with the death of the heroine. His almost but not quite manhood surfaces as hypermasculinity, and the plot completes his individuation process by killing the nurturer heroine and by uniting the hero with Ecmel.

Unlike Hıçkırık, Posta Güvercini has a crowded group of characters whose side stories heighten the main story-line and empower its message. The story revolves around the residents of two mansions. The hero, İskender, a young boy at the age of fourteen, is an orphan, like Kenan of Hıçkırık. He lives with his grandmother, his greedy, womanising pharmacist uncle Nazım, and his wife. Nazım is the father figure in his life who saved İskender from a fire which killed İskender’s mother. İskender’s father, too, is dead, having committed suicide after being disgraced as a politician. Nazım’s one hand has been injured when saving İskender, and this injured hand becomes the representation of Nazım’s sacrifice as well as his insufficiency in his role as a father. Nazım’s wife, on the other hand,

is portrayed as an aggressive, grim and angry woman who often tells İskender off and insists on treating him as a child by washing him in the bath and tying his shoelaces.

The next-door mansion’s residents come back after years of living in Europe: this event opens the story. One of the two daughters of the family, Ecemel, is İskender’s close friend. The older sister, Mübeccel, an extremely serious and studious girl, brings a guest with her. The guest, Şahizer, is a wealthy eighteen year old orphan who plans to stay with the family until she can claim her inheritance.

_Posta Güvercini_ tells the story of İskender’s love for Şahizer which turns into an obsession as the years pass and that causes him to be hospitalized due to ‘melancholy’. As described by various characters in the story such as Nazım, Nazım’s wife, Ecemel and Şahizer; İskender is a clumsy, immature young boy and _Posta Güvercini_, like _Hıçkırık_, is also the story of İskender’s growth. The narrative constantly portrays him trying to prove his ‘manhood’ and the plot describes every corner-stone of his transition from boyhood to manhood. At the opening scene of the story, the fourteen-year-old İskender is narrated being washed and dressed by his uncle’s wife. This goes on until the uncle’s wife commits suicide in the very same bath when she becomes suspicious that her husband is having an affair with Şahizer.

Şahizér, on the other hand, having lived in Europe for a while, is now back to claim her inheritance. She is, like Nalan, a ‘true Istanbul lady,’ claiming what is originally hers. By portraying Şahizer as the true owner and elite of the city, Kerime Nadir once again connects her heroine to the city’s elite whose destinies have been ambiguous and dark due to the changes in the political conditions. However, this time, Nadir adds another player to the picture; money-thirsty capitalists. Furthermore, she places her villains inside the domestic realm when Şahizer and Nazım get married and when Nazım wants to control Şahizer’s money as her husband. Şahizer, however, does not succumb to her husband’s financial demands and only spends her money for the sake of other characters who are in need. Şahizer, therefore, symbolizes the nobility of her class as a true lady as opposed to the newly emerged capitalists like Nazım, and thereby the text places Şahizer’s noble and sacrificial existence in opposition to Nazım’s narcissistic and greedy financial demands.

The clash is not only portrayed between husband and wife but it is also the clash of the social groups that they belong to: the upper class elite against the emerging greedy and materialist bourgeoisie.

Building on Nilüfer Göle’s argument on Kemalist nationalism expressing ‘the rise of the bureaucratic middle classes through its exaltation of Anatolia and the War of
Independence’, 103 Aslı Güneş suggests that the narrated lives in the best-selling sentimental novels of the period are the lives of the bureaucratic elite that point to the elitist characteristics of the Kemalist ideology. In Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling, Nilüfer Göle writes,

As far as the principle of nationalism was concerned, it fundamentally relied upon the populism of Anatolia in opposition to the elitist cosmopolitanism of the Ottomans. It indeed designated the coming to power of the rising middle class […] [The Kemalist nationalism] was against the court in orientation, yet it assumed the Westernist inclinations of the court. […] It was the discursive melting pot of Anatolian populism and Westernist elitism. 104

According to Güneş, the lifestyles promoted in the sentimental novels reflect the lives of the elite who are against empire, but who still support an elitist and class-based Westernization, parallel to the elitist characteristic of the Kemalist ideology. Güneş, for instance, points to the time economy of these elite and suggests that the characters in these novels do not adopt the Protestant ethics of ‘time is money’, as the Kemalist state expects its citizens to but rather, they enjoy leisure time in the privilege of their mansions. 105

Unlike Halide Edib’s criticism of the leisurely lifestyles of the urban elite in Mev’ut Hüküm, discussed in the previous chapter, the novel here celebrate such a lifestyle while the villains of the plots are ones with professions. As Güneş notes, anyone outside the mansions poses a threat: the romance is confined to two individuals who grow up together in order to ensure that the money remains within the family. 106

Güneş’s reading of the melodramas is especially true for Nadir’s Hıçkırık. Except for Nalan’s doctor husband İlhami, none of the characters are seen at work or partaking in any form of paid labour. Nalan’s father is retired, Kenan is too young and there is not even a slight suggestion that Nalan will take up a profession. If nothing else, her health is always too fragile to allow her to work. In accordance with Güneş’s reading, marriage outside the family also proves to be a wrong choice. The doctor who promises to save Nalan’s life if she marries him, abandons her when he is suspicious of an affair between Nalan and Kenan. Additionally, he takes Nalan’s daughter away. Nalan’s decision to marry someone from outside the household is condemned by the text when İlhami indeed turns out to be a ruthless and cruel man.

104 Ibid.
106 Ibid, p.57.
In *Posta Güvercini*, the threat is posed by Nazım. He spends on his own needs while ignoring the needs of the others. He repeatedly demands his wife’s money. İskender’s disappointment at the man who once has been his idol grows as Nazım’s lost hand turns into a reminder of insufficiency as a father figure rather than a reminder of Nazım’s bravery and sacrifice. The plot is in line with the political atmosphere of 1940-1950. The unpopular policies of CHP during the Second World War, along with economic policies such as Varlık Vergisi (The Wealth Tax) or Law on Giving Land to the Farmer created discontent and suspicion among the peasants, the industrial workers, as well as the officers, traders in towns, landowners in the countryside and the bureaucrats. Inflation had dropped and the economic policies of the state were not welcomed by the masses within the country: ‘by the end of the Second World War, the government of İsmet Pasha İnönü had become deeply unpopular, even hated, among the large majority of the Turkish population’. With an election on 14 May 1950, power changed hands and the Democrat Party became the ruling party. I argue that the economic crisis of the post-war period and the aggressive as well as unbalanced growth of the bourgeoisie are the key determinants of *Posta Güvercini*.

What puts Nadir’s novel in line with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is not limited to Nazım’s portrayal as a corrupt head of the household. İskender’s relationship with Nazım becomes more and more Hamletesque as İskender falls in love with his uncle’s second wife, Şahizer. Nazım is not only a womanising capitalist, but he is also infertile and hence incapable of ensuring the continuation of the family. The socio-political worries over the period of transformation from a one party state to a multi-party one are reflected in Nazım’s infertility and, the unbalanced economic conditions in his thirst for money.

İskender’s growing melancholy is also another strong similarity between the two texts. İskender first sees Şahizer by the pond of the next door mansion and like *Hıçkırık*, *Posta Güvercini*, too, offers a foreshadowing for the future dynamics of the relationship between the hero and the heroine right at the beginning. Şahizer’s role as both a mother figure and as the person who stimulates İskender’s sexual desires is revealed the first time they meet. İskender realizes that Şahizer has dropped the pearls of her necklace into the pond and offers to help. He takes off his clothes and dives into the pond, collecting her pearls. However, like Kenan, İskender too is not mature enough for Şahizer.

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107 Zürcher defines the Land Distribution Law as follows: ‘[It] aimed to provide adequate land for farmers who had none or too little by distributing unused state lands, lands from pious endowments (*evkaf*), reclaimed land, land without clear ownership and land expropriated from landowners who owned more than 500 dönüms.’ Zürcher, p.219.

[Ecmel] calls me ‘Şahizer abla’¹⁰⁹, but it is OK if you just call me Şahizer.
- I will call you by your name ‘Şahizer’… Because I am older than Ecmel and I am a man.
Şahizer laughed again:
- You are a very funny child.¹¹⁰

After trying to prove to Şahizer that he is a man by collecting her pearls from the depth of the pond, he then comes out, gets dressed and puts his pants into his pocket, causing his friends from the next door mansion Ecmel and Mübcecel to think that he has wet himself; his attempt to prove his masculinity is disturbed by the audience.

İskender’s circumcision is one of the cornerstones of his transition. It occurs when Nazım organizes a cheap and fast circumcision. The doctor operates on İskender at the top floor of Nazım’s pharmacy without much ceremony. Even though this is an operation that İskender has been waiting for, the quietness of the process upsets him, since he expects the celebration that is normally organized when boys undergo this significant transition. İskender’s circumcision is also a late one. İskender is fourteen when the procedure occurs and it is not celebrated by the crowds as customs require. It is done secretly, away from the eyes of others, as if to symbolise the lateness of his emerging manhood. This invites a Freudian reading of the operation: circumcision as the major reminder of the fear of castration.¹¹¹ ‘Circumcision’ notes Somay, is ‘a tradition which materialises and focuses the actual threat of castration for all males, a reminder that the phallus is not for them to utilise in their fantasies but under the permanent supervision of the castrating father’.¹¹²

The operation is organized by his uncle, Nazım; the man who becomes his biggest rival by marrying Şahizer. İskender feels sad and melancholic after the circumcision, and tries to think of a motherly figure in his life to cease his melancholy. He realizes that Şahizer is that person for him. The Hamletesque characteristic of the text, therefore, is heightened with Şahizer becoming both the mother figure and the object of İskender’s sexual desires. Nazım, on the other hand, turns into a rival.

Upon learning about this secret operation, Şahizer promises to throw a party for İskender to celebrate both his circumcision and his birthday. He receives presents and he is visited and congratulated by many friends and relatives after his operation. Ecmel, his next-door childhood friend, feels jealous and puzzled, unable to understand how

¹⁰⁹ ‘Abla’ is a Turkish word, meaning ‘older sister’ used by siblings of younger ages.
¹¹⁰ Nadir, Posta, p.20.
¹¹² Somay, p.54.
circumcision brings İskender such recognition. By depicting Ecmel’s penis envy, the narrative focuses on İskender’s gendered individuation.

As if to complete the process of İskender’s transition into manhood, İskender secretly peeps through the keyhole of the bathroom after the party, and sees Şahizer naked in the bath. Here, his first sexual awakening occurs. In his *The Uncanny*, Freud connects eyes as a symbol of subjection and suggests that going blind is a form of castration:

> A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration. In blinding himself, Oedipus, that mythical law-breaker, was simply carrying out a mitigated form of the punishment of castration—the only punishment that according to the lex talionis was fitted for him. \[^{113}\]

The Oedipal complex is formed with this event: The man who is capable of castrating İskender is also the man who owns the object of İskender’s desires. From then on the plot depicts an Oedipal crisis. Without solving the crisis, İskender will not be a healthy individual enough to be with the heroine. In Lacanian terms, with the literal castration of circumcision, İskender is introduced to the realm of the Other, the Law. However his entry into the symbolic realm is a problematic one, since he positions Şahizer, the mother figure in his life as the object of desire. The crisis of individuation is heightened even more when Şahizer looks at his penis to see whether it is damaged (this occurs when he tries to ride his bicycle and falls down shortly after the operation). For Şahizer, this is the main event that defines their relationship as that of a mother and son. She is now one step closer to being the mother figure in his life as well as the one who eyes İskender’s penis not as the symbolic phallus, the Thing, but as a thing. She will, therefore, never confirm İskender’s transition to symbolic manhood and never be İskender’s Other who makes his individuation possible.

In other words, İskender’s normalization in a Morettian sense is nowhere near, since as the years pass his melancholy grows. He often defines himself as too fragile for a man. His best friend, Rahmi, a boy from a nearby poor neighbourhood, accuses him of being too callow. On the day of İskender’s graduation, he sleeps with a woman for the first time, imagining that the woman is Şahizer. This is one of the main differences between the two texts. Throughout the book, İskender sleeps with women three times, but in all those three times, he imagines the woman to be somebody else and in two of those times, he rapes Ecmel. Kenan’s passive sexuality in *Hıçkırık* turns into an aggressive and overly

active sexuality in İskender of *Posta Güvercini*. Ashis Nandy’s formulation of hypermasculinity functions as a useful device here to highlight İskender’s aggressive sexuality that compensates for his *almost a man but not quite* state. Nandy refers to hypermasculinity as a defensive and reactionary ‘exaggeration of traditionally masculine traits, such as aggression and competition, to justify power relations.’\(^\text{114}\) In accordance with Nandy’s formulation, the more İskender’s masculinity is undermined, the more his aggressive sexuality surfaces and finalizes in multiple rapes throughout the story.

Such a shift is also in line with the shift of economics in both stories. In *Hıçkırık* the characters’ economic conditions never become a matter of discussion. However, one of the main subjects of *Posta Güvercini* is advanced capitalism. The plot acts didactically by showing the results of greed through Rahmi’s older brother, a drug dealer, and İskender’s uncle, Nazım. As opposed to these characters the text positions Şahizer as a saint-like figure who on the one hand balances her husband’s lustfulness for women and money and on the other İskender’s frustrated sexuality. She however only uses her money/capital to help others and dedicates her life to those people around her. In addition to being a mother figure to İskender and Ecmel and serving to her husband Nazım, Şahizer nurses İskender’s great aunt and helps Rahmi’s mother financially.

In her *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag explores the meanings that are attributed to tuberculosis, cancer and AIDS. One of the popular attributions to cancer, she suggests, is how aggressive, colonizing and invasive it is, and how both doctors and patients complain about the fact that ‘the treatment is worse than the disease’.\(^\text{115}\) The shift from *Hıçkırık* to *Posta Güvercini* with economy and capitalism as its focus, with the change from Kenan’s passive sexuality to İskender’s aggressive and ‘invasive’ sexuality parallels the shift from tuberculosis in *Hıçkırık* to cancer in *Posta Güvercini*. Sontag contends that one meaning attributed to tuberculosis is that it is ‘eating yourself up, being refined, getting down to the core, the real you’, while meanings attributed to cancer are that in it ‘non-intelligent (‘primitive’, ‘embryonic’, ‘atavistic’) cells are multiplying and you are being replaced by non-you’.\(^\text{116}\) I argue that such attributed meanings to tuberculosis and cancer are effective in Kerime Nadir’s use of these illnesses in connection to the plots.

Early capitalism assumes the necessity of regulated spending, saving, accounting, discipline—an economy that depends on the rational limitation of desire. TB is described in images that sum up the negative behaviour of nineteenth-century homo economicus:


\(^{116}\) Ibid, p.67.
consumption; wasting; squandering of vitality. Advanced capitalism requires expansion, speculation, the creation of new needs (the problem of satisfaction and dissatisfaction); buying on credit; mobility—an economy that depends on the irrational indulgence of desire. Cancer is described in images that sum up the negative behaviour of twentieth-century *homo economicus*: abnormal growth; repression of energy, that is, refusal to consume or spend.  

The different meanings imposed on tuberculosis and cancer are not only visible in the changes in the plots of the two texts, but also in the socio-economic conditions of Turkey. For instance, Zürcher writes, ‘the years between 1945 and 1950 were years of growth (roughly 11 percent growth in GDP per year)’. Whilst *Hıckırık* was written at the time of ‘homo economicus’ politics of the CHP government which condemned the leisurely lifestyles of urban elites, and required from its citizens to produce for the sake of the nation rather than for personal gain, *Posta Güvercini* was written at the end of the CHP ruling, when ‘the relative autocracy of Turkey was coming to an end, and that incorporation was speeding up’.

The 1930s in Turkey was the period of early industrialisation, whereas the 1950s was the period of rapid economic development.

While the plot points to the recreation of the moral occult in a period of political turmoil, like in *Hıckırık*, it also presents clear cut expectations from women. On the one hand, Mübeccel of the next door mansion becomes a doctor and declares her commitment to her occupation and rejects marriage. However, she later gets married to an unfaithful actor. Upon her divorce, she realizes that for her, the true sacrifice lies not in getting married but in devoting herself to her patients. On the other hand, there is Şahizer who is described as a selfless, saint-like creature who sacrifices her own wishes for the sake of others’ well-being and happiness. Therefore, the text almost works as propaganda of the Kemalist state which demands that women to be either professionals or mothers. In other words, the gendered roles that the Kemalist state imposed on women are in full force in *Posta Güvercini*. Şahizer’s illness symbolizes her sacrifice and misery. She is a character who suffers for others and because of others, and yet she never attempts to rebel against her husband or anybody else.

The mastectomy surgery proves to be an exit to freedom for Şahizer. She begins to sleep in a different room to her husband – a first sign of abandoning her ‘womanly’ self: ‘I am not strong enough to deal with a man like your uncle anymore, my dear’, she explains to İskender, ‘After all, I’m considered to be a half human now… I am too far away from being the woman he wants me to be and I am very tired…. Imagine, we have been married

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117 Ibid, 63.
118 Zürcher, p.216.
119 Ibid.
for thirteen years and I have not rested even for thirteen days’. The surgery removes one of her breasts and sets her free from the gender norms. She now defines herself as comfortable and most importantly, free.

İskender, however, does not see Şahizer’s mastectomy so positively. After one of her breasts is removed, İskender’s act of putting his head onto her chest serves more as a melancholic reminder of what is missing than a sexual trigger.

She pulled my head to her chest and pressed it [...] On the absence of that beloved breast I was feeling both numb with an eternal satisfaction and achy with a dark sorrow.

However, like Nalan, Şahizer, too, has a replacement, a younger and healthier version: an Ophelia. Ecemel, İskender’s childhood friend and Şahizer’s companion agrees to marry İskender in order to end Nazım’s suspicions over İskender and Şahizer’s affair. Upon hearing Şahizer’s disease resurfacing, İskender gets drunk and rapes Ecemel which results in Ecemel’s pregnancy. Ecemel’s role as a bridge between the two doesn’t end there. Şahizer travels to Europe for treatment and writes İskender letters. İskender, in the meantime, collapses into severe depression and spends his days lying in bed, sick. Ecemel reads Şahizer’s letters to him until the day when she admits that Şahizer has actually died in Europe and that the letters Ecemel has been reading have actually been written by her. In other words, she not only replaces Şahizer, but also takes her place, voice and identity. She is, therefore, the carrier pigeon/dove. Whereas before the death of Şahizer, Ecemel is an empty vessel for İskender, nowhere near being an object of desire; after Şahizer’s death the desire passes on to her and she proves to be The Other who, as the bearer of İskender’s desire, can complete İskender’s individuation.

İskender, however, still suffers from ‘melancholy’ and is finally carried to hospital and diagnosed as ‘melancholic’. The proof of İskender’s need for psychological treatment is found in his melancholy, his extreme sensitivity, or his ‘feminine sensitivity and tenderness’ as Janice Radway puts it while defining ideal heroes’ ‘androgyne’ in romances.

Like Hıçkırık, this text, too, is an act of remembrance. At the opening scene of the novel, we find a prosecutor and a lawyer, discussing a case in which a man, Nazım, demands that his deceased wife’s body undergo a post-mortem to prove that she has

120 Nadir, Posta, p.257.
121 Ibid, p.265.
committed suicide over an affair. İskender comes in and leaves his memoir to prove Nazım’s accusation false. The narrative continues as İskender’s memoir as he remembers Şahizer. ‘Melodrama typically, not only employs virtue persecuted as a source of its dramaturgy, but also tends to become the dramaturgy of virtue misprized and eventually recognized’. Brooks notes that, ‘[it] is about virtue made visible and acknowledged, the drama of recognition’. The accusations against Şahizer’s virtues are weakened in front of an audience whose duty it is to make the final judgement on her actions. When she is cleansed of the accusations, her position is elevated as, like Nalan, she becomes a selfless creature who sacrifices her own life energy for the sake of others. By revealing that the title of the book, Posta Güvercini (Carrier Pigeon/Dove) refers to Ecemel, the book suggests that Şahizer is not even the heroine in the first place. Her raison d’être is to sacrifice herself for the future of the new couple, Ecemel and İskender.

The plot, however, does not end with the death of Şahizer. İskender needs to be treated fully before uniting with Ecemel. The prosecutor takes İskender travelling around the world. Only after the world tour, İskender is cured, normalized. Tosh writes in his A Man’s Place that ‘Among the wealthy one of the recommendations of the Grand Tour was that it served to break the hold of domesticated femininity and instil masculine self-reliance in the young traveller’. İskender’s world tour serves a similar purpose as the Grand Tour did in the late 18th century Britain. Once he finalizes his tour, his melancholy is cured; he is now free of his Oedipus Complex in the Freudian sense and is normalized in a Morettian sense. He unites with Ecemel and their baby when he enters Istanbul again. In other words, he is now ready to take the position of a father through the normalization of his Oedipus complex, and therefore he is now ready to unite with the younger and healthier version of Şahizer. The novel, therefore, ends in a very different fashion to Hıçkırık. The haunting of the heroine is over. The lawyer and the prosecutor watch İskender and Ecemel holding their babies, forgetting the world around them. As the text celebrates the healthy new couple, Şahizer is portrayed as the woman who made this union possible with her sacrifice.

If Hıçkırık is a text of melancholy, Posta Güvercini demands the hero’s melancholy to be treated. The text, therefore, offers a solution to the crisis. In Brooks’s words, ‘If psychoanalysis has become the nearcut modern equivalent of religion in that it is a vehicle for the cure of souls, melodrama is a way station toward this status, a first indication of

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123 Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination, p. 27.
124 Ibid.
125 Tosh, p.113.
how conflict, enactment, and cure must be conceived in a secularized world’. With her sacrifice the heroine becomes a true, untouchable saint and the hero is medically diagnosed for ever dreaming about uniting with her. Posta Güvercini sacrifices the heroine and recommends the hero move forward. In other words, while in Hıçkırık melodrama serves to deal with the trauma of a lost empire and speaks the language of the Kemalist ideology, Posta Güvercini takes a more subversive position and points to the crisis in the realm through both villainizing the greedy bourgeoisie and medicalizing the hero’s obsession with the past.

Both Nalan and Şahizer are depicted as less than citizens, but more than humans. They are not worthy of hero status, but at the same time their existence put heroes back into the realm of the moral occult. They cannot sexually unite with the heroes. Such a possibility threatens their status as good-natured women. By rejecting to fulfil the heroes’ sexual desires, they both represent virtue and deserve their saint-like status. In Posta Güvercini, Şahizer’s saint-like status is approved by a prosecutor and a lawyer since they fully believe that she is an ‘honourable’ woman. Therefore, her status is given in a court that directly looks at whether her sexual actions deprived her of this status or rather caused her to deserve it. In the end, she is depicted as a martyr. Like men who achiive this by going to the war, women’s illnesses become medals which reveal their sacrificing nature and tamed sexuality.

Conclusion:
These melodramas reveal a crisis in the hegemonic masculinity of the period, but they also point to a solution by defining expectations from women and their bodies. They must either be healthy and fit bearers of future generations, or genderless professionals like in the example of Mübcecel of Posta Güvercini. Their desiring bodies, on the other hand, are excluded from the symbolic system of the new republic, reducing them to bare life. In Eric Santner’s words, ‘the human subject succumbs fully to the injunction to enjoy (bare) life, which represents, so to speak, the ‘positive’ aspect of the process of ‘deposition’ that at some level includes him by replacing him outside the set comprising the ‘People’’.

The only way for these characters to exist in the symbolic system is for them to be cleansed from their flesh through illness. Their ultimate gift to the world they live in is their bodily decay which points to their saint-like sacrificial existence. They are, in other words, included in the symbolic system of the republican discourse only by being excluded

127 Santner, p.230.
from it as less than citizens, but more than humans. As the official ideology promoted and demanded healthy and athletic women whose individual lives would be sacrificed to a sense of duty to guarantee healthy new generations for the republic, there was no place for the desiring, uncontrollable flesh of women in the republic.
Chapter 4

Illness and Metamorphosis: Resistant Bodies in the Cold War

The second half of the twentieth century in Turkey witnessed a cultural Cold War along with a growing amount of violence applied by the state, army and police as well as by the armed youth groups of both the left and right. In the previous chapters, the discourse around healthy and fit bodies was proposed as the dominant determinant of the relationship between bodies and the state. With the youth now armed against the state their bodies ceased to be seen as an investment that would ensure the future of the nation. Instead, they became a potential threat for the state. Bodies, therefore, were not only transformed into spaces where the state could exercise its power through torture, imprisonment or execution, but also, into weapons for those who were subjected to the violence of the state.

As discussed in previous chapters, while in Kerime Nadir’s popular melodramas illness is romanticized as a representative of the heroine’s virtues and sacrificing nature, Halide Edib’s allegorical works centre on the illnesses of the heroines who are gradually abandoned and replaced with healthier bodies that become representative of the healthy and athletic nation, thus affirming Kemalist female identity. However, the women’s movement found new stamina in the second half of the century when the Kemalist female identity, along with its docile body, gradually came under scrutiny. From the 1960s onwards, there was a growth in women writers’ works that vocalized radical positions that were critical of the state as well as patriarchal society, as opposed to earlier works by women writers that were produced broadly in line with official state ideology. The criticism produced after the 1960s by women writers on the subject of gender norms and patriarchal society revealed the gap between the everyday reality of the individual self and what Ayşe Durakbaş called ‘the Kemalist female identity’.\(^1\) With left-wing criticism of state policies spreading among youth culture, feminist criticism found a position from which to approach Kemalist female identity critically. Hence, as Paker suggests, ‘Engaging in left-wing politics appears to [have] be[en] an outlet for female characters breaking away from domesticity and serve[d] as means of exploring sexuality and/or questioning the institutions of family and marriage in newly formed, usually extramarital relationships’.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Ayşe Durakbaş, *Halide Edib: Türk Modenleşmesi ve Feminizm* (Halide Edib: Turkish Modernization and Feminism) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), pp.119-127.

Pointing to normative female characters in Halide Edib’s works that show ‘what a woman and/or her relationship with a man should be like’, Paker notes, the normativity of characters in women’s literature would come to an end in the 1960s and ‘this new perspective must be seen in terms of an approach that was not normative, as in Halide Edib’s fiction, but explorative, addressing the question of what is to be a woman in contemporary society’. 

The works scrutinized in this final chapter take the material body as their focus; their very act of rejecting the allegorical body becomes an act of political resistance as they turn bodies into weapons. Remembering past events since the ‘cold nights of [her] childhood’, Tezer Özü’s account is interwoven with a narrative of pain and illness both mental and physical. As a result of her suicide attempts she undergoes severe electroshock treatments, which undercut the linear narrative. In moments of pain, her thoughts reflect the main problematization of her subjectivity, one that seeks enrichment towards joy through contact and touch but is oppressed and put through severe treatments in order that she conform. Sevim Burak, on the other hand, turns a hospital machine into a figure of authority that she resists through recalling the figure of Samuel Beckett and the Nigerian juju dance in her short story ‘African Dance’. As opposed to the oppressive machine that constantly gives orders, Sevim Burak twists and turns the language until the narrative itself is difficult to grasp. The narrative itself, as Jale Parla puts it, ‘joins the dance’. Written a decade after Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ (African Dance, 1982), Aslı Erdoğan’s ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ (In The Void of a Lost Eye, 1996) and ‘Wooden Birds’ (1997) are short stories where patients redefine themselves and embrace illness as an identity which opens up new possibilities for them despite the limitations of their physical conditions. In all three examples, physicality, the sense of touch and pain, and the inefficiency of meaningful language at times of absolute physicality are turned into opportunities to destroy order and authority and to create a new world. The protagonists of these works all go through a process of becoming and metamorphosis in order to break away from a society that makes its patriarchal existence felt on their skin through violence and oppression. They turn this oppression that they have to endure into resistance, ultimately turning the body and

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6Another writer who concerns with illness in her fiction in this period is Sevgi Soysal with her short story “Agac” (Tree) or her novel Şafak (Dawn). However, I believe her works require a detailed discussion in relation to the so-called “12 March” novels that are beyond the scope of this work.
physical pain into weapons.

1. From Docile Bodies of the Nation to Resistant Bodies of Individuals: Transformation in Cold War Turkey

The transformation of the regime from a one-party-state to the multi-party system marked the second half of the twentieth-century in Turkey, leading to two three coup d’etats (1960 and 1980), one coup by memorandum (1971) and two failed coup attempts (1962 and 1963). In Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989, Kerem Öktem defines the period between 1946 and 1980 as ‘the guardian state’s incomplete democracy’. Guardian state, as a new phenomenon, emerged during the transformation of the regime to a multi-party one. This has historically been seen as the continuation of the early republican discourse on the nation as a young and progressive entity in need of careful and constant guidance, as discussed in the earlier chapters. Although the nation finally had the power to elect its government by 1946, the need to guard the nation became more explicitly for the nation, in spite of the nation in the ‘self-ordained role [of the military] as guardian of the Republic’. As Öktem notes, ‘It was in this period that Turkey’s incomplete and conflict-ridden democracy emerged with a resilient authoritarian parallel state at its core which would regularly intervene to keep elected governments in line, to get rid of them if need be and to manipulate society to sustain its power’. In an atmosphere affected by the Cold War, criticism towards the national ideals of the Kemalist regime turned the youth of the country into defiant individuals as well as potential threats. The third coup of the second half of the twentieth-century, when a new constitution was prepared in 1982, was a clear reflection of the state’s perception of its own citizens; in Baskın Oran’s words, the state felt the need to...

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8 Using A. R. Luckham’s categories on military guardianship, Ümit Cizre defines the term in relation to the Turkish case as follows: ‘In the “guardian state” model, the military regards itself as the Platonic custodian of a vaguely defined national interest. A. R. Luckham in his seminal article makes a distinction between four sub-types of military guardianship. The first is “Direct Guardianship”, where the military views itself as the unique custodian of national values; the second is “Alternating Guardianship”, where the dynamics are the same but the military alternates in and out of power; and third is “Catalytic Guardianship”, whereby the military in question may not wish to rule itself but installs governments favourable to itself. The last category is “Covert Guardianship”: the military may submerge and yet retain the capacity for direct action by supporting in the long term a political order that supports national security. The Turkish military’s political role can be said to have shifted between each of these sub-types over time.’ Ümit Cizre, ‘Ideology, Context and Interest: the Turkish Military’ in The Cambridge History of Turkey vol. 4, ed. by Resat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.301-332 (p.301).
9 Öktem, p.40.
10 Ibid.
“protect [itself] from its citizens.”11 As the state forced bodies to become docile through imprisonment, torture and execution in order to mould them once again in the ideals of the state, embracing the body as personal territory became one route to freedom.

The popularity of the Republican People’s Party drastically declined towards the 1950s, eventually forcing the party to organise the first multi-party election in 1946. Among the many reasons behind the decline in its popularity, the financial policies of the government was the most powerful. During the Second World War, excessive investment in the army led the already fragile financial system into turmoil with increasing inflation and a shortage of goods.12 As a solution, the government applied price controls as well as taxation on profits.13 Wealth tax and taxation on agricultural produce were the two policies that caused unrest among the bourgeoisie and large land-owners.14 In addition to these economic reasons, Feröz Ahmad notes that the CHP had been losing the support of the people who had ‘suffered under the wartime regime that was imposed upon them, marked by widespread corruption and the rule of the gendarme’ as well as the principle of laicism/secularism which they ‘never understood how they had benefited from’.15 The Democrat Party, therefore, benefited from the criticism towards the CHP government by promising a more liberal state that would end the “tyranny of the state.”16 As Ahmad argues, ‘voters were convinced that by bringing the Democrats to power they would free themselves of an oppressive state and improve their material lot as well’.17

On 14 May 1950 the Democrat Party was elected as the ruling party.18 This was a historic election that would end three decades of the People’s Party rule. The Democrat Party was ‘an entirely new phenomenon’ as Erik J. Zürcher puts it, as it was ‘the first political organization in the country’s modern history with a genuine mass following,

11 Öktem, p.52.
14 Ibid.
16Ibid, p.234.
17Ibid.
18The 1950 election was the second election that the Democrat Party had participated. The first multi-party election of Turkey, the election of 1946 was won by the Republican Party, however, there were deep suspicions about the counting of the votes. The 1946 election would be later named as “the dubious election (şâibeli seçim)”. Mete Kaan Kaynar, ‘Türkiye’nin Ellili Yılları Uzerine Bazı Notlar’ (Some Notes on Turkey’s 1950s) in Türkiye’nin 1950’li Yılları (Turkey’s 1950s), ed. by Mete Kaan Kaynar (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015) pp.15-38 (p.17).
which had been able to express its support in a free election’. Led by a former member of the parliament and a large land owner, Adnan Menderes, the DP brought together ‘a growing bourgeoisie that wished for more autonomy from the state – which had created the Muslim industrialists in the first place – and the conservative, mostly rural population of Anatolia, which wanted to maintain a degree of autonomy from state intervention and attain better material conditions’. According to Behice Boran, the end of the CHP rule and the election of the Democrat Party was ‘the first active sign of growing political consciousness of the masses’ and hence, the result of the election should be read as the very first resistance against the ‘authoritative, top-down regime’.

Such resistance had also begun to show itself in works of literature since the post Second World War era. According to Çimen Günay-Erkol the declaration of socialist realism as the official literary style of the USSR in 1932 had effected the writers in Turkey, leading them to explore ‘a new type of realism with an augmented interest in the exploitation of the masses, social injustice, and the contamination of politics’ that allowed them to ‘criticize, more boldly than ever, Turkey’s worn-out traditions, political orthodoxies, and feudal habits’. Generalizing, Berna Moran suggests that the East-West dichotomy, a theme that had found itself a central place in Turkish novels in the first half of the twentieth-century, was gradually abandoned in the second half of the century and was replaced with a problematization of social inequalities. According to Moran, while the works of the first half of the century were recreating the official ideology of the state (he sees Nazım Hikmet and Sabahattin Ali as exceptions in the pre-1950 period), the writers of the second half of the century had begun to put a distance between themselves and the state. Accordingly, Moran defines the ‘Village Novels’ (or ‘Anatolian Novels’ as Moran puts it) that focused on inequality and struggle in rural areas with an aim to reveal the social conditions in Anatolia, and used examples of oral literature of local legends and myths in their narratives, as the products of such emerging and growing critical approaches to the state. Among the many examples of the products of this literary movement, there were *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (On Fertile Lands, 1954) by Orhan

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19 Zürcher, p.228.
20 Öktem, p.41.
22 Ibid.
23 Moran, p.7.
24 Ibid, p.14
25 Ibid, p.16.
Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk* (1955) by Yaşar Kemal or *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* (The Seed in the Steppe, 1967) by Kemal Tahir. In her bio-bibliographical entry on Kemal Tahir, Burcu Karahan defines the movement as follows:

Although provincial Anatolia is featured in a couple of novels and short stories in the late Ottoman era and in the early decades of the Republic, the genre that is called the village or peasant novel emerged in Turkish literature in 1950 after the publication of the novel *Bizim Köy* (translated as *A Village in Anatolia*, 1954) by Mahmut Makal. A villager himself, Makal was trained at Village Institutions, public boarding schools established in 1940 as part of the rural development project of the Republic to train teachers for the villages. These schools led to a remarkable increase in the number of literary works dealing with the realities of villages and villagers’ lives threatened by such phenomena as natural disasters, feudal exploitation, social injustice, religious fanaticism, poverty, and blood feuds.26

The start of the Cold War led to a clash between communism and liberalism within the country which reframed the already existing clash between Muslim identity and Western modernity that characterized the literature of the period.27 Accordingly, communism posed a threat to national integrity and the freedom of the country, fuelling and positioning nationalism against left-wing tendencies. To suppress the criticisms of the CHP and its followers, the Democrat Party began to use religion to ensure the support of its religious base. As the criticism towards its ‘discourse promoting individual achievement and wealth, development and equality as well as religious piety and social conservatism’ became gradually louder, the government became more authoritarian and oppressive. While the government’s control over the press and the universities, along with the ongoing communist witch-hunt which was silencing voices of opposition, the American lifestyle was promoted through works of popular culture.29 In addition to the boom in women’s lifestyle, fashion and decoration magazines, picture books and gossip magazines were also consumed by the masses.30 A lifestyle of luxury was promoted with music-halls and casinos becoming increasingly popular, which Murat Belge likens to the American jazz age.31

With the liberal economic policies and Americanism in the decade of the DP rule, individuality and private life were for the first time overshadowing communal life, with

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27 Moran, p.16.
28 Öktem, p.41.
31 Murat Belge ‘Kültür’ (Culture) in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi 5* (Encyclopaedia of Turkish Republic 5), pp.1288-1304 (p.1302).
individuals no longer existing for the sake of the community. This is in stark contrast to the views discussed previously in relation to Halide Edib’s works. In her article ‘Allegoric Lives: The Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novel’, Sibel Irzık reminds us that ‘The Turkish novel has seen itself as a means of social critique and mobilization ever since its beginnings during the last decades of the nineteenth-century’.32 While this ‘condemns [the characters] to lead allegorical lives’,33 resistance to melting the identity in the grand national narratives would come out through revealing parody and irony.34 Irzık, in particular, points to the ‘historical dream narratives’ in Adalet Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die), Tutunamayanlar (The Disconnected) by Oğuz Atay and Time Regulation Institute by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar as examples of such clash between the private and the public.35 Although Cold War literature in Turkey was preoccupied with the political struggle, the fight to (re)claim the self and personal space was also a growing trend, especially after the election of the DP government.

Accordingly, works that were existential in subject and modernist in form were produced in the period alongside the Village Novels, especially in the growing number of literary journals of the period which led the way to heated debates on whether this type of literature was an ‘escape literature’ and whether literature should be produced for the people or for its own sake.36 In poetry the ‘İkinci Yeni’ (Second New) movement was the modernist expression of the change, and included works of poets such as Ilhan Berk, Turgut Uyar, Cemal Sureya and Edip Cansever. The existential crises of urbanites were explored in modernist short stories by writers such as Leyla Erbil, Bilge Karasu, Ferit Edgu and Tezer Özlu’s older brother, Demir Özlu. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s A Mind At Peace (1949) or Time Regulation Institute (1954) and Yusuf Atilgan’s Aylak Adam (Idler Man, 1959) were among the examples of the modernist tradition in Turkish language novels. This was a radical turn and a reaction to the works of the previous period which

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33 Ibid., p.556.
34 Ibid, p.559.
36 Aysel’s dream in Ölmeye Yatmak where she is getting ready to present her dissertation on ‘how to save the country’ to a committee led by Atatürk only to watch her dissertation disappear and is replaced by a pot of dolma, Irzık notes, ‘...what makes the dream both comical and psychologically revealing is the awkwardness of the assumed or demanded coincidence between individual and national destinies, the burden of feeling obliged to achieve such a coincidence, and the pain of failing to do so, of being “unmasked” as a particular individual.’
‘valorise[d] the sacrifice of individuals and intellectuals for the cause of the national-social collective’.\footnote{37Erdağ Göknar, ‘The Novel in Turkish: Narrative Tradition to Nobel Prize’ in The Cambridge History of Turkey 4, ed. by Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.472-503 (p.488).} The transformation between the periods of the CHP rule and the DP rule in literature, therefore, also marks the transformation of emphasis from community to individual which inevitably changed the image of the body from representative of the nation to now private territory.

Nurdan Gürbilek contends that ‘in order for privacy to emerge, the ubiquitous embrace of the public would have had to relax and private life be delineated as a separate sphere alien to the life of the city’ and that ‘in Turkey this engagement only began to show itself shyly in the 1950s, and in Istanbul rather than Ankara’.\footnote{38Nurdan Gürbilek, The New Cultural Climate in Turkey (London & New York: Zed Books, 2011), pp.62-66.} As discussed in the first chapter, Ankara was transformed from a village to the project city of the new government. This phase of ongoing transformation, with new apartment blocks, wide squares, public spaces and highways, represented the core of a \textit{new} Turkey, while Istanbul had come to represent a decadent Ottoman Empire. With the election of the Democrat Party, however, Istanbul once again had become a cultural centre of \textit{‘gazinos}, bars, palaces, tea house dancing [and] jazz’.\footnote{39Ibid, p.66.} The new modernist and existentialist literature would emerge from Istanbul rather than from the ‘utopian city’ Ankara.

Liberal with its financial policies, the Democrat Party however kept on increasing its authoritarianism as its financial plans proved to be inefficient. On 27 May 1960, Turkish armed forces interfered, taking over the administration and suspending the constitution.\footnote{40Ibid, p.45.} This would be later known as the 27 May Coup, the first coup in the history of the modern Turkish state which would result in the execution of the prime minister, Adnan Menderes, the foreign minister, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and the finance minister Hasan Polatkan.

As Erdağ Göknar notes, the Cold War continued to have an impact on society with students splitting into ‘leftist and rightist camps, wherein university students became increasingly polarized and clashed in bloody skirmishes’.\footnote{41Göknar, p.495.} In order to portray the level of bloodshed on the streets, it is necessary to briefly look at the student movements, starting from the 1950s. \textit{Fikir Kulüpleri} (The Clubs of Thought) were founded in universities as a reaction to Adnan Menderes’s right-wing policies and they were gathered under \textit{Fikir Kulüpleri}.\footnote{42Göknar, p.495.}
Kulüpleri Federasyonu (Federation of Clubs of Thought) in 1965. This was followed by the foundation of Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions, DİSK) in 1967, ‘an organization devoted to enhancing the revolutionary level and awareness of workers, and bringing them together in political struggle’. The election of the Adalet Partisi (Justice Party, AP) whose leader, Süleyman Demirel was the heir to Adnan Menderes, led student groups to seek a revolution. Fuelled by the spirit of 1968 in Europe, left-wing student organizations believed in the coming of a socialist world. Under the influence of examples in Latin America and Vietnam, some of the leftist organizations became armed guerrillas. With international ties, some of the left wing activists were trained in Jordan, in the camps of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s al-Fatah group, and some in Iraq by Kurdish militants. According to Nur Bilge Criss, the approximate number of Turkish militants trained in Jordan alone was four hundred. In 1969, the Federation of Clubs of Thought was renamed as Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu (Federation of the Revolutionary Youth of Turkey, DEVGENÇ) and within the organization two groups were formed: Türk Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (Turkish Army for People’s Liberation, THKO) with Deniz Gezmiş as its leader and Türk Halk Kurtuluş Cephesi (The Turkish Party for Popular Liberation, THKP-C) with Mahir Çayan as its leader. Right-wing groups were also formed to ‘combat communism’ and they were armed in the training camps that were aided by the right-wing Milliyetçi Hareket Paartisi (Nationalist Action Party, MHP). As a result, 1970 not only saw many bloody clashes between the two wings but also witnessed robberies, bombings and protests by both sides. In March 1971, the Turkish Army for People’s Liberation kidnapped four US soldiers which resulted in the Turkish army attacking student dormitories, killing three and detaining more than two hundred students. The soldiers of the US army were released by the group; however, on 12 March 1971, military officers issued a memorandum, ‘accusing the government of not taking the necessary steps to prevent anarchy and fratricide’.

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43Ibid.
44Ibid, p.5.
45Ibid.
47Ibid.
48Ibid, pp.5-6.
49Öktem, p.49.
leader of the THKO was detained shortly after. Upon the continuation of civil disobedience, martial law was declared in eleven provinces.\textsuperscript{51}

This, however, was only the beginning of violent clashes between the state and Marxist youth. To ensure the release of Deniz Gezmiş, members of the THKP-C kidnapped the Israeli ambassador, Elfraim Elrom on 17 May 1971. The government answered by detaining approximately five hundred leftist intellectuals. The members of the THKP-C eventually killed Elrom, ‘committing the first political murder of Turkey’s Marxist youth movement’.\textsuperscript{52} Following the event, martial law courts were opened and ten thousand people were imprisoned. In March 1972, the leader of the THKP-C, twenty-six-year old Mahir Çayan, along with several of his comrades, were killed in Kızıldere after kidnapping three British and Canadian army technicians to ensure the release of Deniz Gezmiş. In May 1972, twenty-five year old Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades, twenty-five year old Yusuf Aslan and twenty-three year old Hüseyin İnan, were executed.

Between 1971 and 1980 the democracy remained unstable, with eleven governments formed, some of which would serve up to three years, some of which would be dismantled in a month.\textsuperscript{53} The governments were ineffective in preventing ‘the mounting violence, strikes, boycotts and the deteriorating economic situation’.\textsuperscript{54} As a result another coup d’état was organized on September 12, 1980. Çimen Günay-Erkol notes that in the period between 1970-1980 the number of causalities is assumed to be more than five thousand.\textsuperscript{55} According to Ergün Özbudun causalities between 1975-1980 were ‘equivalent of Turkish losses in the War of Independence’.\textsuperscript{56} Still, the bloodiest coup of all three, the 1980 coup, which was followed by a three-year military junta, was yet to come. According to the numbers presented by Öktem, during the three-year junta, more than six hundred thousand people were detained, two hundred and ten court cases were opened, and among the ones whose executions were requested, forty nine were hung.\textsuperscript{57}

As Erdağ Gökınar notes, the violent atmosphere of the 1971 coup by memorandum and its ‘closed world of prisons, torture, police stations, martial law and of ‘counter-guerrilla’ interrogation centres funded by the US became accessible to the reading public.

\textsuperscript{51}Öktem, p.49.  
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid, p.50.  
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid, p. 51.  
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{55}Günay-Erkol, ‘Cold War Masculinities’, p.8.  
\textsuperscript{56}Quoted in Günay-Erkol in 'Cold War Masculinities', p.8.  
\textsuperscript{57}Öktem, p.59.
through novels based on real-life individual experiences’. Some of these novels would later be called ‘the 12 March novels’, after the coup of 12 March 1971. Among the examples of this group there were *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (A Wedding Night, 1979) by Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Yaralısun* (You Are Wounded, 1974) by Erdal Öz and *Şafak* (The Dawn, 1975) by Sevgi Soysal. In her doctoral dissertation, Çimen Günay-Erkol reminds us of the testimonial characteristic of these texts and suggests that they were not only reflecting the historical events but also creating the historical narrative about the events. She defines the ‘12 March novels’ as ‘novel[s] of manners’ and likens the influence of these novels on their readership to a ‘Werther effect’, suggesting that the characters of these novels acted as role models for the youth of the period.

According to Moran these novels continued the tradition set up by the Anatolian Novels, with two main differences: In these novels the focus was urban rather than rural and unlike the Anatolian novels which depicted fictive stories of bandits who fought against the system, ‘the 12 March novels’ focused on real events that took place where students were armed against the state. Hence, Moran notes, these novels, too, were formulaic like the Anatolian novels: one could expect to read about an unfair political system, exploited working class and heroic revolutionary that replaced another unfair political system, exploited peasants and heroic bandit. And yet, unlike the hopeful and heroic characteristic of the Anatolian novels, ‘the 12 March novels’ were focused on the aftermath of ‘heroic’ events where revolutionary protagonists would often end up passive victims, taken into custody and forced to undergo torture and imprisonment. Pointing to the testimonial value of some of the so-called 12 March novels, another prominent critic, Murat Belge, too, defines these novels as formulaic and makes a division between the novels that were written by writers who themselves were members of leftist organizations and underwent imprisonment and torture, and writers who followed the events from outside. According to Belge, the works of the former group were able to critically approach the movement, while the latter were narrating heroic portrayals of revolutionary youth.

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58 Göknar, p.495.
62 Berna Moran, p. 11
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid, p.11.
65 Ibid, pp..15-16.
Similar to Moran and Belge’s criticism of the texts, Erdağ Göknar points to the testimonial characteristic of these texts and argues that ‘they were, in a sense, oral histories whose content took precedence over their form as they explored and excavated changing relationships and identities in the context of the triangulation between state, society and individual’.67

Opposing the definitions of the works of the generation of 1968 as ‘political flags waved at the skies of ideologies’ or as ‘socialist realist novels that attempt to institute the education of working-class people in the spirit of socialism’ Günay-Erkol points to the existential questioning in the texts and argues instead that these texts ‘feature stories of ordinary people and ordinary lives, stories that shed light on the disillusionment of the citizens of Turkey, in a period of rapid change that pushed the country toward an earnest self-interrogation’.68 She challenges the idea that defines these works as texts that reveal ‘class dynamics and material obsession’, suggesting that this was only one part of the problematization of these texts. Hence, she argues that ‘they were primarily engaged with the sufferings of bourgeois intellectuals during the coup’.69 According to Günay-Erkol, the place of the individual in these works was too strong to be ignored, which made them ‘overlap textually, more fittingly, with the existentialist works of the so-called “generation of the 1950”, because they likewise focus[ed] on individuals’ struggles in collectivities’.70

The works produced after the 1970 coup, in other words, were pointing to the crossroads between the public and private, political and individual. As Göknar notes, ‘In turn, the social engagement of yesterday became the existential angst of the present’.71 The idea of the individual melting in the plurality had turned into political crises felt in the individual territory. On such a transformative change, Erdağ Göknar writes:

The period after the coup saw the emergence of the individual out of the national-social collective. This was the first period of committed feminist literature, prison memoirs, coup novels, existentialist texts and absurdist narratives, most of which were in their own ways indictments of the ideologies of the patriarchal military state and/or socialist opposition. The emerging individualism, or ‘individual realism’, did not completely abandon committed socialist literature; however, a new aesthetic between the psychological and the national-social found its way into fiction. This often led to a narration of the crises in Turkish society and politics since the founding of the Republic that resulted in a pattern of military coups. Collective critiques based on national identity or class gave way to

67 Göknar, p.495.
69 Ibid, p.16.
70 Ibid, p.17
71 Göknar, p.495.
more subjective accounts from the perspective of victims of the state whose voices had been suppressed.

This, I argue, functions as the bridge that connects the allegorical use of body in the works that have been scrutinized previously in this research and the body as a territory where the personal becomes political in the works of Tezer Özlü, Sevim Burak and to an extent Aslı Erdoğan. In other words, when bodies are forced to return to being docile via coups, torture, imprisonment and execution, they are also in turn endowed with resistant power.

In The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World, Elaine Scarry argues that while torture fattens the body of the torturer as a weapon that will inscribe the power of the state on the body of the prisoner, the prisoner is left voiceless, for during an interrogation ‘The question, whatever its content, is an act of wounding; the answer, whatever its content, is a scream’. Therefore, she suggests that torture gives voice to the torturer, it fattens the body of the torturer for it is the state that speaks through the torturer, consequently turning their body into a weapon. As Teresa Macias suggests in ‘Tortured Bodies: The Politics of Torture and Truth in Chile’, ‘The state invests the torturer with its voice, for let us not forget that it is the state that grants the power to systematically torture; this is not a common crime’. The tortured prisoner, on the other hand, is deprived of their own voice, and, as Scarry argues, ‘Despite the fact that in reality he has been deprived of all control over, and therefore all responsibility for, his world, his words, and his body, he is to understand his confession as it will be understood by others, as an act of self-betrayal’. In the moment of complete voicelessness, as any language will be a betrayal of the self, the tortured body turns back in on itself:

Each source of strength and delight, each means of moving out into the world or moving the world into ones self, becomes a means of turning the body back in on itself, forcing the body to feed on the body: the eyes are only access points for scorching light, the ears for brutal noises; eating, the act at once so incredible and so simple in which the world is literally taken into the body [...] Even the most small and benign bodily acts becomes a form of agency [...] The ‘self’ or ‘me,’ which is experienced on the one hand as more private, more essentially at the centre, and on the other hand as participating across the bridge of the body in the world, is ‘embodied’ in the voice in language. The goal of the torturer is to make the one, the body, emphatically and crushingly present by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice, absent by destroying it.

74Scarry, p.47.
75Ibid, pp.48-49.
When bodies themselves are transformed into voices through torture, imprisonment and execution, this inevitably also endows bodies with a resistant power: ‘Even the most small and benign bodily acts becomes a form of agency’. Giving such agency to the body when the voice itself is cut down is exhibited in Tezer Özlü, Sevim Burak and Aslı Erdoğan’s texts as a celebration of body, reclaiming the self by stripping it of its national allegory. In Tezer Özlü, this leads to a romanticization of nature as a protest against the cold houses of people whose individualities have become one with the grand narrative of the nation. The act of touching and experiencing the world, not through a mission for the collective, but only through personal experience, becomes a resistant celebration (and romanticization) of the tactile. Sevim Burak’s narrative, on the other hand, becomes a celebration of the body and its agency in the face of a machine that orders the narrator to be docile and anonymous. Finally, in Aslı Erdoğan, illness and physical deficiencies open up new spaces of freedom for the protagonists who embrace abject positions, and bodies turn into weapons.

2. Resisting through Skin: Becoming in Tezer Özlü’s _Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri_

In the previous chapters, the heteronormative and regulative definitions of the body have been discussed in relation to Halide Edib’s national allegories and Kerime Nadir’s melodramas that affirmed the official state discourse on the healthy and young body of the new woman. Here, however, I argue that Tezer Özlü loads the material body to shatter the regulated body. She uses physical movements, tactile experience and the climax of sex as weapons against various discourses surrounding the body.

To dismantle a linear narrative, she adopts a narrative that moves from one association to another through her memories. She therefore disrupts the idea of a fixed identity by creating a _Bildungsroman_ that moves in two layers: One that follows a linear line through institutions of oppression, and one that moves through her memories and tactile associations. The text, therefore, becomes a war zone where the latter constantly disrupts the former with tactile experience, disrupting the mould of the docile body. She not only resists oppression through physical experiences, but also her constant search for change, transformation and metamorphosis undermines a fixed identity. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation of affect and becoming in their works, including _A Thousand Plateaus, Anti-Oedipus_ and _Difference and Repetition_, offer a useful model to
approach Özlü’s placing the material body outside of civilization in this text. As for Özlü’s
text, tactile experience is one that opens the narrator up to the world, changes and enriches
her being. In the end, physical experiences become not only her method of survival but
also a revolutionary device against a system that subjects her to discipline and punishment.

Formed as a Bildungsroman, Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri (Cold Nights of
Childhood, 1980) portrays the growth of the protagonist as she moves from one type of
institutional oppression to the other, only to be forced to conform. The first institution that
the text scrutinizes is the patriarchal family life in which three siblings have to obey the
rules of the father and through his rules, the principles of the Kemalist nation-state. In the
opening scene of the text, the father wakes his daughters up by blowing a whistle, an
explicit sign of the internalized Law of the State where the family is likened to the military
and every daily activity, from waking up to washing one’s face, is managed and calculated
to mould children into ‘docile bodies’. Such management of life and bodies not only
claims control on the childish behaviours of the narrator and her siblings, but also
functions as regulatory.

In Ev Ödevi (Homework), Nurdan Gürbilek relates the clash between the father and
the child narrator to the clash between the generations; while the father reflects the
Republican generation who values community over individuals and equates individual
satisfactions to the ones of the state, the child narrator belongs to a generation that values
the individual over the state. In the world that the father represents, one does not live
according to one’s wishes, but one lives for the greater good of the society. The symbols of
the power of the state are scattered in the small house in which the family lives. Years later,
when the family moves to Istanbul, the father prepares an ‘Ataturk corner’ in the living
room which includes a bust of Ataturk along with a Turkish flag. The father forces
members of the family to sing the national anthem on national holidays or stand to
attention when the national anthem is sung on the radio. The narrator also describes her
room, which she shares with her sister, through his father’s rules.

On the wall across our desk father puts up his rules:
My children:
1. The light should come from your left.
2. The book should be positioned 30-45 cm away from your eyes.
3. As soon as the work is finished, lights should be turned off etc...

I wish you success with my wish for you to become dutiful children for this country. Your

The petite bourgeois life and its patriarchal, as well as militarist and nationalist norms, make the family house a ‘cold’ one in the eyes of the narrator. Waking up in a cold house, the narrator finds their black school uniforms ‘getting the night’s cold’. The narrator and her sister have to wash their faces in an ‘ice cold bathroom with ice cold water’. However, institutions of family, school and hospital are not only sensually, but also metaphorically cold. The married life of the narrator’s parents are described as an example of the lack of intimacy, ‘Like every member of the petite bourgeoisie, they are attached to each other with the obligation of responsibilities’. Such metaphorical as well as literal coldness is felt by the narrator most powerfully in her body.

I wake up at a late hour of a dark night. Everybody is sleeping their regular sleep. The house is cold. I try to be very quite. I swallow handfuls of pills that I have been collecting for days. I eat bread with jam in order not to vomit. I am a young girl. I prepare all day for my dead body to look beautiful. It is as if there are people I want to take revenge from with a beautiful dead body. It is as if there are houses, sofas, carpets, music, teachers I want to oppose to. There are rules I want to oppose to. A cry! You can have your little worlds. A cry! 

Gürbilek points to two contradictory characteristics of the house: It protects from the outside world, functioning as a cocoon, but it also envelops and suffocates. Hence, Gürbilek argues that this is a text about leaving the suffocating walls of the petite bourgeoisie family houses. Agreeing with Gürbilek, I also argue that the body carries two opposing effects: It is controlled and is subjected to discipline, but it also carries the potential within to shatter the system and disrupt the order. Hence, while the text portrays a systematized authority in the opening scenes, it simultaneously presents a method of resistance as exemplified in the opening where the narrator is woken up by her father. She opens her eyes in her sister’s bosom and questions what similarity the father possibly finds between their family and the army. While the father shouts, “If you were so fragile, why did you come to the military,” the child narrator resists his authority by praising the intimacy and touch of the bodies as well as warmth of the bed. At nights she nestles

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78 Ibid. p.9.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid, p.11.
81 Ibid, p.12.
82 Gürbilek, p.63.
83 Ibid, p.7.
84 Ibid.
against her mother to protect herself ‘both from cold and loneliness’. The mother whose skin functions as a protector from the cold is a significant figure that points to the need for skin-to-skin contact of the narrator and acts as a reminder of the primary haptic experience through birth, since it is ‘the birth canal of the mother, [that] gives the child its first experience of skin-to-skin contact’. Haptic experience becomes a form of resistance.

According to Abbie Garrington, there are four types of haptic experiences: Touch, kinaesthesis or the body’s sense of its own movement, proprioception or the body’s sense of its own orientation in space, and vestibular sense or balance reliant upon the inner ear. The haptic experience or perception focuses on senses as the core of perceiving the world. Such experience of the ‘lived body’ or ‘lived flesh’ does not only refer to the sense of touch, rather, it points to sensing or feeling the world; this includes sensing the time as Virginia Woolf’s Moments of Being exemplifies, or the sense of movement and orientation as exemplified by Woolf’s Night and Day. The experience of the ‘lived body’ is perhaps best exemplified by Jinny of Woolf’s The Waves when she says,

I see what is before me. […] This scarf, these wine-coloured spots. This glass. This mustard pot. This flower, I like what one touches, what one tastes. I like rain when it has turned to snow and become palpable. And being rash, and much more courageous than you are, I do not temper my beauty with meanness lest it should scorch me. I gulp it down entire. It is made of flesh; it is made of stuff. My imagination is the body’s.

‘Lived body’ in Vivian Sobchack’s words, is ‘a phenomenological term that insists on “the” objective body as always also lived subjectively as “my” body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world’. The haptic theory places body at the centre of lived. While it does not place conscious identity before body, it is also different from Judith Butler’s formulation of performativity which suggests that appearance of substance is ‘a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief’. Hence both identity and body are products of power.

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87 Ibid, 16.
relations, since ‘there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body’,
and ‘language and materiality are fully embedded in each other, chiasmic in their interdependency, but never fully collapsed into one another, i.e, reduced to one another, and yet neither fully ever exceeds the other’.

While Butler contends that there is no material body coming from the discourse as it becomes accessible only through language, the theory on haptic experience, on the other hand, emphasises specifically the carnal materiality of the body as separate from discourse. Accordingly, neither Sobchack nor Garrington position their theorisation of haptic in relation to poststructuralist theories on the body. In her *Beckett, Technology and the Body*, Ulrika Maude, however, positions her reading of the carnal materiality in Samuel Beckett’s *oeuvre* in relation to poststructuralist thought:

Although Foucault can be said to have initiated the current interest in embodiment, the body in his work emerges as a discursively ordered product of institutionalised knowledge and power. The emphasis, rather than being on the body itself, lies on discourse. Similarly, post-Lacanian feminism, in its anti-essentialist drive, has stressed the discursively produced nature of gender, exemplified in the work of theorists such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. While my aim is not to refute the importance or value of either of these influential theoretical standpoints, one could argue that the body is often curiously neglected, if not absent, in both. In what could broadly be characterised as poststructuralist thought, the discursively produced body takes precedence over, if not eclipses, the flesh. Put another way, the problem of representation is privileged over experience. One of the salient characteristics of poststructuralist accounts of embodiment, therefore, is the curious mutation of the significance of the body into the problem of the body as signification.

In her work, Maude focuses on the material body through Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in which sensations are offered as prerequisites of the objective world without which there is no lived experience. According to Merleau-Ponty the body is both the object and the subject. It is experienced through senses as much as it experiences the world through senses. As Maude notes, Merleau-Ponty specifically focuses on the phenomenon of the phantom limb to explore, what Maude defines as ‘bodily memory’.

To have a phantom arm is to remain open to all the actions of which the arm alone is capable; it is to retain the practical field which one enjoyed before mutilation. The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be

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93 Ibid, p.38.
continually committed to them. 96

Tactile also differs from senses like vision or hearing as Santanu Das notes, ‘Vision, sound and smell all carry the body beyond its margins: tactile experience, by contrast, stubbornly adheres to the flesh’. 97 The perception through skin and touch therefore creates a possibility of the experience of the self. Body interferes and creates ‘the moments’ as exemplified in Woolf’s *Moments of Being* or ‘On Being Ill’. Physicality interrupts the subjectivity and identity and offers a vivid lived experience of the moment.

Senses, especially tactile, occupy a central place in Tezer Özlü’s text. The linear narrative of the memoir is often interrupted with the narrator’s commenting on sensual desires. After the narrator’s early suicide attempt, the father suggests that something as simple as the taste of fruit is enough not to think about death. The narrative, however, is interrupted with the narrator’s commentary that clearly does not belong to the consciousness of her young self, but to the mature narrator who remembers the incident. The interruption of the linear narrative through a secondary narrative voice, who at times makes comments on what is told by the primary narrator is, I argue, how the form of *Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri* resists the traditional *Bildungsroman*, what Bakhtin defines as ‘an image of man growing in national-historical time’, 98 and instead creates a counter-narrative which does not follow a ‘real historical time’ but rather puts lived body and physical experiences at the centre. The story, therefore, becomes more personal, and hence, moves away from being a ‘national allegory’. 99

We are at the hallway of the house. Günk comes too. My father offers us figs:
-When there are tasty fruits such as these, how can one think about death?
  he says.
  (Even today, I don’t know how aware he was of the reality of his words.)
  The thought of suicide leaves me. I will wait for natural death like the majority. 100

This also contrasts with the narrator’s suicide attempt which is not a purely personal act, but rather a public one where she defines her suicide as a ‘cry’ against ‘houses, sofas, carpets, music, teachers … [and] rules’. The second narrator who interferes in the real

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96 Ibid, p.94.
100 Özlü, p.13.
historical time with comments in parenthesis, however, chooses to define the taste of figs as a reason to be alive. The primary narrator’s declaration of her decision on waiting for the ‘natural’ death displays the narrator’s move from public to private, national to individual as well as her positioning of nature as outside the political.

This is also evident in the form of the text through its resistance to Bildungsroman. The linear narrative is not only broken by parentheses, but also interrupted as the narrator jumps from one incident to the other through associations rather than the linear order of things. While at times the narrator interferes in the narrative with comments in parentheses that express her latest thoughts on the specific incident discussed in a given paragraph, at other times, the order completely relies on the narrator’s memories that progress through associations. Seeing One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975) in a cinema abroad brings the memories of her own hospitalization. This is then connected to the memories of her marriage and how her husband listens to French music every night, especially Leo Ferre, and tries to create a little Paris in their living room. The narrator then remembers a Leo Ferre concert she goes to years after her divorce and how she feels a strong urge to hold the hands of a stranger next to her.

Following the Bergsonian idea of a “leap into the past”, in A Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define becoming as anti-memory and oppose the idea of memory as an indicator of fixed and consistent self. They instead suggest a notion of memory as a “block of becoming” which is productive and active. Suggesting that memory is a form of becoming, they note:

Memory has a punctual organization because every present refers simultaneously to the horizontal line of the flow of time ((kinematics), which goes from an old present to the actual present, and the vertical line of the order of time (stratigraphy), which goes from the present to the past, or to the representation of the old present.

Therefore, memory becomes an active force, a block, “strengthening desire instead of cramping it, displacing it in time, deteritorializing it, proliferating its connections, linking it to other intensities” always creating the new, rather than repeating a fixed memory. I argue that Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of memory as a form of becoming that is productive and active, offers a tool to understand Özlü’s narrative that undermines the

101 One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, dir. by Milos Forman (Fantasy Films, 1975).
linear order of Bildungsroman. By proceeding the narrative through associations, the narrator of Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri does not simply narrate the story of her growth through a linear order, but, rather, recreates it. Her choice of tense is also mostly present tense which blurs the lines of past and present. With the presence of her writing time being dominant at all times through comments in parentheses or through her choice of narrating the story out of order by mostly relying on sensual associations, she depicts a past in relation to the present, rather than a present in relation to the past. Hence her fictional memoir does not function to depict her growth into a fixed self, but the form itself resists the institutions of authority that force her to become a fixed self.

As opposed to the cold nights and oppressed days, the moments of sensual experience are narrated full of hope and potentiality. Such moments of being, craving for the world and beyond is often posed as a reaction to the claustrophobic limits of patriarchal norms, institutions of family, marriage, school and hospital. The narrator depicts the nights where she shares a bed with her sister, Süm, in this manner. Süm sleeps easily in the middle groove of the bed, the narrator however ‘searches for sleep in the groove’.¹⁰⁴

I sleep on her knees every night. We will part tomorrow.  
-I will kiss you,  
she says.  
- But I haven’t kissed a boy yet.  
-I will kiss your upper-lip, and you will kiss my lower-lip,  
she says.  
We are doing what she says.  
If only they let us. If only I lay on her knees. If only we learn our bodies by following our instincts. If only we love each other. If only we grow up in the love that nature will cultivate. Like a child in a mother’s womb.¹⁰⁵

The section of wishing and desiring (‘if only’) however does not go on. Instead, the narrator goes back to narrating the details of her daily life, starting from a portrayal of her grandmother, Bünni, who sleeps in the same room with them and whose most used word in ‘almost ninety years of her lifetime’ is ‘Allah’. As opposed to her moment of love with her sister Süm, life goes on with Bunni’s five times a day prayers. The narrator, however, feels something more than the order of the days can capture. The affect, ‘moments of intensity, a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter’¹⁰⁶ leads her actions into a ‘continuous’ becoming that is ‘oriented only towards its process or movement rather than toward any

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.  
¹⁰⁶ O’Sullivan, Quoted in Daniela Caselli, ‘Kindergarten theory: Childhood, affect, critical thought’, Feminist Theory 11 (2010), 241-254 (p.244).
teleological point of completion’.  

(Years later, when I see little primary school children going to school in the dark of the morning in black clothes, by memorising patriotic poems that I have never been able to erase from my memory, in humid Istanbul mornings...
-None of the problems have been solved,
I cannot help but thinking. I want to disjoint the clouds, grasp the sun, run in the hills with children; experience trees, wind, the sun, rain, people with them.)  

These moments of intensity are expressed as the desire for being in the moment and ‘experiencing’ the world with childhood functioning as a romanticized escape from order and regulation. As critically approached by Daniela Caselli in her article entitled ‘Kintergarten Theory’, when childhood is perceived as one that interrupts order, it is then portrayed as one with the power to ‘transcend language (intended as temporary, shifting and charged) and to bring us back to the real (as the opposite of language, as the place that is).’  

Childhood, therefore, is posed in line with Deleuzian affect or Kristevian semiotics, ‘the ineffable romantic joy of experiencing something one thought irretrievably lost’.  

In Ev Ödevi, Nurdan Gürbilek reads Özlü’s Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri as a narrative of struggle to escape childhood, or more particularly, a childhood that is shaped, framed and limited by the norms and values of petit bourgeois families who hold the nation and state above all else. Gürbilek reads Özlü’s text as one that reflects the tension between the generation of the founding republic (the guardians of the nation) and the generation that came after and fought against that state (the revolutionaries). Although I agree with Gürbilek on Özlü’s protagonist’s attempt to escape home and childhood, I will also argue that it is a text that mourns for a childhood that is lost and tirelessly searches for that lost childhood. The protagonist, therefore, craves for the ‘natural’ and pure’ experiences, thereby exemplifying what is problematized in Caselli’s article. As a result, in Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri such craving is only satisfied through tactile experience which helps her open herself to affect.

In those autumns, winters, springs and summers we are only children. But instead of a childish happiness, we have a strange discontent, a gloominess in us. In front of us, there is the distress that is caused by teacher parents, narrow houses in Muslim neighbourhoods, the Catholic atmosphere of church school, the almost mad behaviours of the nuns that do not accord with our thoughts, the other teachers, learning, not having anyone to lead our

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108 Özlü, p.22.
109 Caselli, p.242.
110 Özlü, p.22.
thoughts and our whole lives that we are expected to fully grasp. Life has been brought in front of us as something to grasp and understand now and to be lived and realized in the later years. As if it is a globe that is brought in geography classes. Nobody talks about how the seasons and days we live in are the life itself. We are always prepared for a doctrine that is emphasised. For what?\textsuperscript{111}

It is only through \textit{lived bodies} that the narrator and her friends manage to break away from the limits of their lives, with childhood functioning as a gate to \textit{natural} desires. Until they go through puberty, they sexually pleasure each other. These ‘natural love-making’ scenes, however, are finished after puberty when they begin to pleasure themselves on their own which ‘drags one into loneliness’.\textsuperscript{112} Sexuality becomes a tool to overcome such loneliness later in the text which makes becoming possible. The loss, therefore, functions as the drive or the desire towards constant becoming in line with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of loss as a productive force for becoming. As they argue in \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, ‘Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object’, on the contrary, ‘It is, rather, the \textit{subject} that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression’.\textsuperscript{113}

When I sleep with him, it is as if there were neither men nor any big miseries in all those past years. There is only love, a desire that has remained alive. It as if years, incidents have never worn me out, on the contrary, they have led my feelings. They have thought me the sacredness of beauty, loving somebody, caressing somebody’s skin, uniting with somebody, and to enjoy such sacredness. […] Climaxing with him is so insatiable that it is as if the sun rises in the West and, really, sets in the East in this country. We sleep together again towards morning. The one whose warmth that waits for me and that numbs my body, I experience with all my wetness. The most beautiful moment of life. […] This moment that becomes sacred with the unison of two people. Eternity. This moment that reconciles all the other moments of existence. The eternity in two people’s unison must be the core of human life. […] This tremor two people experience by embracing one another must be the core of universe. This unison that reaches eternity, gives life, keeps alive, takes life into further eras.\textsuperscript{114}

On the one hand, Özlü’s text follows a line that portrays the growth of an individual as she is transformed from one oppressive institution to the other such as home, school, marriage and mental institutions. On the other hand, it positions the image of childhood and through it, tactile experience as points of resistance, untouched by ‘doctrines’. Unlike the Butlerian idea of sex as a regulatory ‘ideal construct which is forcibly materialized

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p.23.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p.24.
\textsuperscript{114} Özlü, p.64.
through time’, Özlü uses sex as a gate to the experience of the body and the world. Henceforth, Deleuzian concepts of affect and desire function as useful tools to approach the role of childhood, tactile and sex in Özlü’s narrative.

In Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari formulate a productive desire which is disruptive as well as creative, it seeks to free itself from habits and instincts or anything that is fixed or fixated. Desire is the desire of territorializing, deterritorializing, changing, transforming and endlessly becoming. In Claire Colebrook’s words, Deleuze’s notion of desire is ‘not a desire that someone has for something she wants or lacks; but a desire that is just a productive and creative energy, a desire of flux, force and difference, a revolutionary desire that we need to think in ways that will disrupt common sense and everyday life’. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari define desire as revolutionary and suggest ‘If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society’, and ‘there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors’. In Tezer Özlü’s text, desire is not caused by a fixation on the loss; and it is not ‘found at the level of the splitting of the subject, of the cut, the bar’. It is not impossible to achieve and it does not move in circles; it does not bring forth a split in the moment of enunciation and hence it is not acceded ‘through castration’. Rather, it is a productive force; it is a way to become one with ‘the core of the universe’ as the narrator puts it.

Instead of an idea of desire as lack, Deleuze and Guattari formulate rhizomes that they liken to maps as opposed to tracing; a map ‘has multiple entryways’ and it does not ‘come back ‘to the same’ for it ‘rejects any idea of pre-traced destiny’. Thus, rhizome is what makes desire move towards ‘external, productive outgrowths’. According to Deleuze and Guattari, rhizome is the entirety of life which consists of fluxes and folds that turn life into an unending process of becoming in unity with all beings, including plants or inanimate objects. Such life includes the entirety of the world with multiplicities and different possibilities, creating the field of immanence. Such a notion rejects the idea of a self, since ‘The field of immanence … is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves

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115 Butler, Bodies that Matter, p. xii.
119 Ibid.
120 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateus, p.12.
122 Ibid. p.10.
because interior and exterior are equally a part of immanence in which they have fused’. Accordingly, one never is, since one is always becoming, never settled, always folding, responding to everything around them. What cannot be captured by the words, and its continuity, according to Brian Massumi, is ‘nothing less than the perception of one’s own vitality, one’s sense of aliveness, of changeability (often signified as ‘freedom’). And it is only when the narrator of Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri touches/feels tactually, that the intensity reveals itself as a sense of aliveness.

In Özlü’s text, sexuality is one of the ways of ‘external, productive outgrowth’. ‘I don’t make a big differentiation between men and women’ the narrator tells her friend, ‘What is important is combining your body with the warmth of the person next to you, the merging of the two’. What she is after is the Affect that touching another human’s skin brings forth. ‘Affect is the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide, or come into contact’ notes Felicity J. Colman, ‘As a body, affect is the knowable product of an encounter, specific in its ethical and lived dimensions and yet it is also as indefinite as the experience of a sunset, transformation, or ghost’. Simon O’Sullivan defines it as a happening, a zone, a space, or in Alain Badiou’s words, an ‘event site’ that is ‘immanent to this world’, ‘not arriving from any kind of transcendent plane (and not transporting us there) but [is] emerging from the realm of the virtual’. According to Massumi, affect is ‘synaesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing’s potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another (tactility and vision being the most obvious but by no means only examples; interoceptive senses, especially proprioception, are crucial’. Tezer Özlü’s use of sexuality in Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri functions as a contact point with the world. It is its affect on her senses; closeness and intimacy that opens up boundaries for the narrator who embraces the world through her skin only to transform and combine its affects with other senses.

I am thinking about the beauty of the wetness of soil. I am thinking about my numbed body when I lay with him. I shudder. I am thinking about the beauty of human wetness. I say, countless sexual meetings have taught me this, the love for this moor, dry fields, the

123 Ibid, p.182.
125 Özlü, p.35.
128 Massumi, p.96.
redness of the sun, human love. This love is not concentrated on a specific person, at all. It climbs from worms under the soil up to the sky above and moves beyond planes that leave paths of clouds behind them.  

Another one, mental institution, however, disrupts the narrator’s desire to live and experience the world. Under electroshock treatments, sexual abuses and torture, the narrator loses her ability to imagine what the world is like behind bars in hospital rooms. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze differentiates *logos* and *nomos*; while the former ‘proceeds by fixed and proportional determinations which may be assimilated to “properties” or limited territories within representation’, in the latter ‘which must be called nomadic... there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute *themselves* in an open space – a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits’. To explain the difference between the two more in depth, I will borrow Eugene Holland’s metaphor. Holland likens Deleuze’s theorisation of nomadism to an improvisational jazz band whose group coherence unlike a symphony orchestra, ‘arises immanently from the activity of improvising itself’. Such a non-hierarchical and forever in the process of deterritorializing way of being, nomadism provides Rosi Braidotti with a method of thinking to explain ‘good health’ and ‘poor health’ which is useful to understand illness and good health in Tezer Özlü’s fictional memoir. Citing Buchanan’s understanding of Deleuze’s notion of ‘good health’ Braidotti suggests, good health is openness to change and to affect and it is an ‘on-going and sustainable’ process of deterritorialization. Poor health on the other hand, is ‘the death of desire’. It stops the flow and burdens the potentiality of its intensity.

Following the above section which ends in a complete desire for the whole world from worms under the soil to skies up above, the memoir goes on to describe the narrator’s first marriage. She agrees to marry despite not loving her husband-to-be, to build her own house full of books and music, and full of freedom. Her husband, however, is someone who can be described in ‘poor health’ in line with Braidotti’s description. He lives a fantasy of Paris every night in his own house with music and drinks and memories. His limited world creates a deadliness in their relationship which has no potential for change or

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129 Özlü, p.31.
130 Ibid, p.56.
134 Ibid.
135 Özlü, p.42.
evolution but is stuck with the obsession of Paris as a ‘saviour city’. The love of life that she experiences with another person’s touch does not exist in their sexual intercourse. ‘Our intercourse, its excitement, ends in a desire of death,’ she notes, ‘I have to leave him because of this’. When he is in Paris however, she reaches the peak of her vividness, creativity, change and enjoyment of life. The flow of her thoughts gain pace, she feels love for people and in return she feels loved. Her experience of life becomes so full of enjoyment that she even shortens her sleeps to be able to experience more.

My husband is in Paris. When I come back from work, a beautiful silence welcomes me. On those days, I only listen to Telemann. I sit on the balcony in the loft. I watch the sun of a moorland of a long, beautiful autumn going down behind bare hills. In the following days, a new development occurs in a flash. I sense that I live in an extreme beauty, and I shorten my sleeps. It is as if my talents grow. I understand everything better. Short sleeps make me more vivid, more alive. I work tirelessly. I love people more than ever, it is as if they love and call me more too. The natural flow of life fastens. My flow of thoughts fastens. He is in Paris. Everything is better without him. He will come back. He will interfere in this flow with his own depressions and his own unhappy perception of the world. His own hopelessness. He should stay in Paris. Or if he comes back, he should live without me. This is neither friendship, nor marriage, nor love.

When such flow is unburdened, the narrator reaches the peak of her vividness and creativity; however, eventually her marriage breaks her desire and her openness to the world, starting a five-year-long period of her institutionalization in various mental hospitals. Like her marriage, these institutions, too, are described as ‘dead’ and forever passive. All the patients are ‘lifeless, slow and quiet’. The quietness and paleness of the patients spreads like a disease in the air, soil and vegetables that surround them in the garden of the hospital. Food is tasteless. Light that comes from lamps feels dead. She, too, eventually loses her desire for life completely. Such unwillingness to live does not even create a desire to die but rather it leaves her with a lack of desire overall. Occasionally she is discharged, but feels unable to cope with the people around her. Just when she is about to feel vivid through the experience of touching a man’s hand, her husband appears to take her back to a hospital. The narrator accuses people around her of not living as ‘powerfully’ as she does. ‘In their worlds, ups and downs are not as big’, she explains, ‘in their worlds depression does not turn into a fear of death, or maybe desire of

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136 Ibid, p.43.
137 Ibid, p.42.
138 Ibid, p.36.
139 Ibid, p.38.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid, 44.
death’. Their regular meals become proof of their conformity, ‘Emotional euphorias do not feed them like food’. Whereas other people conform, the narrator suffers from non-conformity, ‘Whenever I begin to behave the way I want, I am taken back and locked behind bars’. While the narrator follows her desires with the flow, people around her ‘are trying to protect their positions in the system despite their advocating revolution’. This is the point where Tezer Özlü’s Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri equates the narrator’s personal struggle to live and experience the world freely to the social struggle of the 1970s that created the uprising of the youth who hoped for a revolution. The coup d’etat of 1970 and 1980 are never explicitly discussed within the narrative except at times when her personal desire to be freed coincides with the bigger social struggle.

I want to open myself to some things, I want to run to some places, I want to grasp the world. I sense that the world is different to what we have been lived and taught. Yet, there are no phenomenons to resolve these anxieties in those years. A resistance towards the state has begun. Robberies, anti-democratic actions are discussed... But what is widespread is only existentialism.

While Özlü’s own work shows parallels with existentialism with its focus on the struggle of the self, I argue that her autobiographical fiction and her experiencing the social struggle through the struggle of her existentialism brings her closer to another writing form, known as ‘the confession’. Emerging after the publication of the poem collection, Life Studies by Robert Lowell in 1959 when M.L. Rosenthal used the term ‘confessional’ to review Lowell’s poems, it brought forth a new movement. Along with Robert Lowell, John Berryman and Allen Ginsberg were also the followers of the movement. Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton attended creative writing courses by Lowell himself in Boston University in 1958. Plath scholar and poet Nilgün Marmara notes, ‘The poets of the confessional movement were aware of the terror of the century they were living in and they were melting their identities in the collective and international pain, wishing to re-create a new - I’. In ‘Plath, History and Politics’ Deborah Nelson highlights the importance of considering the historical elements behind Plath’s works and considers confessional poetry as a part of the post Second World War movement in which plurality gained importance as

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142 Ibid. p.45.  
143 Ibid.  
144 Ibid. p.50.  
145 Özlü, p.46.  
146 Ibid. p.25.  
a protest against the white and male dominance of the ideologies of the age. According to Nelson, ‘the colonization of the private self by the state’ was defining the atmosphere of the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s and while society was demanding the renunciation of individuality, confessional writing was presenting these poets as a means of liberation and protest.\textsuperscript{148} While confessional writing offers a method to reclaim the self in an oppressive atmosphere created by the Cold War and its subsequent communist hunt, I argue that Tezer Özlü’s fictional autobiography also evolves from a similar dynamic in reclaiming the body in an atmosphere of coup d’états and communist witch hunts, turning her becoming into a revolutionary act as a response to oppressive state policies as well as national allegories. In a way, by choosing becoming as a way of living, her life becomes more revolutionary than the lives of the members in her social circle who actively attended the leftist revolutionary movement.

The electroshock treatments she has to endure on the other hand become a symbol of oppression and torture that the state applies on non-conforming bodies. As Seval Şahin notes, when she is beaten by the caretaker at the hospital or when the head nurse wants the narrator to strip in front of her boyfriend, the narrator’s suffering under the oppressive powers of authority-holders is equated to the state violence which is simultaneously felt in full-force as the revolutionaries are caught by the army one by one.\textsuperscript{149} Accordingly, the narrative that depicts the electroshock scene is likened to a police interrogation.

And now it has gone so far that they are applying electroshock on me / Maybe they are using the method of electroshock to make me talk / The doctor must have come home / On top of it all, the electroshock device in his hands is a strange one / It is like a wooden, shoe shining box/who knows, maybe he hasn’t been able to arrange the electricity well / or maybe it is the fault of city electricity / it goes up and down / and can kill one /and now they have put me into an electroshock coma in my home / do they want to make me talk / does my husband really want to know whether I have cheated on him or not / what difference does it make if he has been cheated on or not / are they making me talk / am I talking / they shouldn’t have done this to me / I don’t have any secrets\textsuperscript{150}

It is therefore not surprising that during the intense session of electroshock, she equates her suffering to the suffering of revolutionaries under torture.

I say, I’m dying, you continue the revolutionary fight without me. (I do not give myself any


\textsuperscript{149} Seval Şahin, ‘Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri’nde Anlatı Stratejileri ve Ideoloji’ (The Strategies of Narrative and Ideology in Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri) in \textit{Gülebilir miyiz Dersin?} (“Do You Think We Can Laugh?”) ed. by Feryal Saygılgılı and Beyhan Uygun Aytemiz (İstanbul: İletişim, 2016) pp.169-187 (p.182).

\textsuperscript{150} Özlü, p.52.
roles in the revolutionary fight neither in the 12 March period nor before or after it. My
behaviours or my thoughts do not mean anything beyond destroying the boring limits of
bourgeoisie’s little freedoms). But then, in a shock coma, on days when such struggle was
going on, wishing for this struggle to continue, wishing for it to succeed, is not for
enduring the deadly power of electricity that was given to my head, or to make my death
easier. It’s a natural wish. It is a wish for the revolutionary struggle that has grown with me,
that has unfolded with me, that is the core of my essence to succeed. A wish that comes out
naturally when I come face to face with death. The core of my thoughts.  

The naturalness of such desire for the revolution to succeed and the narrator’s
equating her personal struggle with the social struggle turns her into a politically active
revolutionary: One that resists through her skin. As opposed to works written during the
period that focused on protagonists who endured state-violence and hence were in a
passive position, Tezer Özlü’s narrator is an active fighter in resisting oppression. The
electroshock treatments and the trauma it brings forth, combined with electroshock as a
torture method applied to political prisoners, create an intensity, leading the way to
‘pastness opening onto a new future’. Hence, Özlü turns trauma into a realm of
productivity.

Friends are waiting for one another in the coffee house. I love them. All of them are people
who feel the pains of their countries and fight to change the system. We have a strange
union against the newly emerging, rich black marketers who are deprived of any humanity.
We are stronger together. On these summer evenings, at the tables of the cafe that exceeded
to the streets, there is a strange feeling in our ever-growing friendship group. It is as if
everybody is expecting for a better life to come and find us. 12 March period is over. Yet,
the pain of this period has settled in us, taking possession of our existence. The power of
terror was going to try to leak and spread for years and years, leading us to even darker
days. On breezy summer evenings as we prepare ourselves for little lives, it is impossible
not to feel these pains deeply. As always, there is restlessness. It is growing. It is not getting
smaller. Then some of our friends die one after the other. They are people who are only in
their forties. We bury with them our desire and expectation of better lives. Better lives are
not ahead of us. A better life does not have a different shape. A better life is here. In Taksim
Square. It is among the dark crowd that shines shoes, that sells pickles, rice, flowers,
postcards. There is no better life in a different shape, in a different place other than among
this dark crowd that open up in front of our eyes, emotions, smell of urine that spreads
through the square, smell of exhaust, cars that do not move in the traffic. The good life is
limited to the lives our friends who died and have been buried. Gani’s house is still
sealed. The same mouse is sitting at his window.

I think to myself ‘Just the beauties of this neighbourhood is enough to live, to enjoy living. These natural elements should have been enough to keep him from death.’

151 Ibid.
152 Massumi, p.91.
153 Özlü, p.61-62.
What makes Tezer Özlü’s Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri a text of resistance is her ability to portray the growth of an individual not as the passive victim of institutions, but as an active desiring body. The text points to a break with individuals eternally subjected to authority, but moves beyond oppression by turning to the body only to open it to interaction, responding to the world, becoming and experiencing the world. This is not only evident in the plot, but also in the form that blurs the limits of novel and autobiography. Its usage of non-linear narrative connects one form of oppressive institution to the other to which she responds by choosing sexuality, the sense of touching, the intimacy of other people and opening herself to Affect as ways to live and experience life. As much as the oppression of various institutions entraps the narrator, she turns her body into a plane that opens to the world and thereby resists to the bourgeoisie, its limits and its values.

3. Doing a Juju Dance in the Face of X-Ray: Sevim Burak’s “Afrika Dansı” as a Text of Modernist Resistance

In Türk Romanında Postmodernist Açılımlar (Postmodernist Developments in Turkish Novel) Yıldız Ecevit points to 1970s as a breakthrough in the emergence of modernist and postmodernist writing in Turkish literature not in a respective order, but rather simultaneously as a sign of disengagement from social realist works.\(^\text{154}\) Although in Sibel Irzik’s words, politics in the Turkish novel has never been ‘a pistol shot in the middle of a concert’, starting roughly from the 1960s the tendency to distance themselves from the official state ideologies became more visible among increasing number of writers. While early on writers such as Nazım Hikmet or Sabahattin Ali were singular voices which adopted critical positions against the state, the 1960s saw the resistant voices grow into literary movements. As Günay-Erkol notes, existentialism and individualism became the dominant themes in the works of literature produced in and after this decade. In poetry this found its most explicit expression in the Birinci Yeni movement and in short stories in the works of Demir Özlü and Bilge Karasu. In longer prose, the singular place of Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar whose Mind in Peace and Time Regulation Society are often defined as the pioneers of the modernist novel writing in Turkish language literature, has been varied with examples like Adalet Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak or with Öğuz Atay’s Tutunamayanlar

\(^{154}\) Yıldız Ecevit, Türk Romanında Postmodernist Açılımlar (Postmodernist Perspectives in the Turkish Novel) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), p.85.
as one of the pioneers of post-modern writing in Turkish language literature. It is roughly during the 1960s that novels began to focus on the tension between the communal life and the individual as well as the tension caused by the failure of the individual to fulfil a national role and their resistance to the need to fulfil such a role. Such tension also points to the change of the image of the body from allegorical to private. In her Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım (Metamorphosis and Writer in Turkish Novel) Jale Parla points to the increase in the image of physical fragmentation in works produced following the 1960 coup as a method of resisting the violence, torture and oppression applied by the state, police and military. As Elaine Scarry notes, while the aim of the torture is to mute the voice and hence the agency of the tortured, it simultaneously endows body with agency. Every daily, physical act from eating to excretion becomes forms of agency. In this period of the Turkish language literature, the sick body functions as resistant and patient-hood becomes revolutionary.

Sevim Burak, a writer known for her avant-garde short stories and plays, wrote her ‘Afrika Dansı’ (African Dance) in 1982, two years after the 12 September 1980 coup d’état. In this short story, the narrator is a patient at a hospital, receiving orders from a machine. Unlike works that I have discussed in the previous chapters, the illness of the narrator of ‘Afrika Dansı’ is not in anyway related to the nation as the way Halide Edib’s Sara is in Mev’ut Hükiüm (The Promised Verdict). Similarly, her health is not a symbol of a healthy generation as Halide Edib’s Lale’s is in Tatarcık. While the narrator’s health or sickness does not represent the nation’s fitness or degeneration, it also does not lead to a romanticising of the narrator’s character. She does not die and become a sacred representation of womanly sacrifice like Kerime Nadir’s Nalan or Şahizer. Her narrative of illness, however, becomes a war zone between her freedom and the disciplining orders of the hospital machine. Here, I read Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ as an example of a text on/of becoming-minoritarian and discuss how the text embraces illness, sick body and patient-hood, thereby turning lived body into a weapon against hegemony as a way to reclaim the ownership of the body.

The text follows a cut-up narrative with the machine’s orders written in capital letters, doctor’s diagnoses given in square boxes or with the patient narrator’s experience given without full-stops or commas, as if the narrator is in a state of dissolving.

The machine that gives orders is depicted as much more than a machine, since it shows the ‘characteristics of a white man’.\textsuperscript{157} According to Parla, the machine symbolizes mechanized doctors who keep patients, especially women patients under their hegemony.\textsuperscript{158} While I agree with Parla’s reading, I also suggest that, at times, the questioning of the machine also becomes a reminder of a police questioning in which the interrogee feels completely helpless and desperate for it to end, similar to the electroshock scene in Tezer Özlü’s \textit{Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri}.\textsuperscript{159}

SHOW ME YOUR WET SWIMSUIT
WHERE DID YOU HIDE IT FOR ALL THESE YEARS (Is it still under your clothes)
...
WHO GAVE YOU THE PERMISSION TO WALK AROUND IN A WET SWIMSUIT
THE PROBLEM KEEPS GROWING
WHY DID YOU WALK AROUND IN A SWIMSUIT
...
WHAT WAS YOUR JOB
DID YOU WORK UNDER THE GROUND (I was fired)
YOU MAY
YOU MAY NOT
YOU DID IT
YOU DID IT
WHAT IS YOUR NAME
WHO GAVE YOU YOUR FIRST CIGARETTE
EVERY NEW QUESTION INCREASES THE TIREDNESS
...
THREE BOXES?
DID YOU INHALE IT
WHY DID YOU INHALE THE SMOKE
IT KEEPS ASKING\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, p.13.
\textsuperscript{158} Parla, p. 218.
\textsuperscript{159} Sevim Burak was reportedly very disciplined and deliberate about the styles of her pages and would pay special attention to the placement of her lines on the page. I have tried to be as loyal as possible to her choice of style in the sections cited directly from her works.
\textsuperscript{160} Burak, pp.10-11.
The machine not only demands answers but also orders its patients to gather in the streets and squares. It shouts at them, orders them to move forward or backward, to make a circle or to come close. As the machine orders them to take pills, the narrator wonders whether she, too, will end up as a dead body who is taken out of the building secretly. While the orders of the machine can be read in line with police orders in protests organized by students or workers’ unions, the patients are likened to prisoners.

GATHER TOGETHER (In the wards)
DO NOT MOVE
NOBODY MOVES (In the wards)
EVERYBODY IS THINKING
GATHER TOGETHER
IN THE GROUND FLOOR
EVERYBODY OBEYS THIS CALL
BECAUSE THIS IS THE RULE
HOPELESS PEOPLE
OBEY THIS RULE
BUT

(In the wards/ in the ground floor/ even though they gather together and listen to it/ by sidling to each other quietly/ ALAS! SHALL WE RUN AWAY AND SAVE OURSELVES FROM THE MACHINE they think)\textsuperscript{161}

What classifies this text as one about resistant bodies, is revealed when the narrator fights against the machine by focusing her gaze on a shadow at the back of a machine, dreaming about Africa, more specifically Nigeria, and Samuel Beckett. As the machine tells her to strip, breathe or not to breathe, she, instead, begins to day-dream about her days past in Nigeria, thinks of Nigerian tribes along with various traditional dances and masks. Her desire and love for the Nigerian culture along with her cultural appropriation function as resistant and the traditions of Nigerian tribes are positioned as images that counteract the oppression of the machine. ‘Because [she is] afraid of the machine that has characteristics of white man’ she wanders in the corridors of the hospital looking for the man she fell in love with in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{162} She imagines herself to be in tribal clothes to express her opinions about the machine to the machine on the day of her surgery. The hospital corridors become the Tinubu Square on Lagos Island, and her wait for the surgery becomes a wait in Barbeach with the members of Seraphim cult, for Jesus to appear and save.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid, p.13.
Such waiting is parallel to her waiting for the machine to save her when the machine tries to seduce her to obtain her paper of drafts. The narrator is a writer herself as her narration points to papers attached to the curtains and later hidden under her bed. Sevim Burak, using cut-up method, wrote her later novel *Ford Mach 1*, onto papers only to cut them into little pieces. She then combined these pieces in a different order, hanging them on the walls and curtains to change their order repeatedly.\(^{163}\) As Burak writes in her letters, her short story collection, ‘Afrika Dansı’ and her later plays came out of this manuscript. Accordingly in ‘Afrika Dansı’, when the machine demands her to remove the pieces of papers that are attached onto the curtains, the narrator hides them under her bed. The machine, however, wants to obtain and destroy the papers, claiming that they are bad for her health. To convince her, it becomes a man and tries to seduce her. The narrator approaches the machine without feeling sure about whether he is really trying to save her or on the contrary, capture her. She is not sure whether the machine, like Jesus, is a saver, an affectionate lover or a destroyer.

On the one hand, the position of the machine as a medical authority is replaced with a lover’s with the machine attempting to seduce her to ensure her conforming. On the other hand, as the narrator approaches the machine, the papers keep rustling, making it impossible for her to conform. This increases the narrator’s doubt about the true desire of the machine. The machine becomes the white man, Jesus or the universal and majoritarian face who attempts to trap the narrator in the closed circuit of sameness. As she tries to avoid the machine, she desires another figure who will help her resist the tyranny of the machine. This new figure is no other than Samuel Beckett, whom she wishes to be there, to be her lover, to hold her hand and wander in these corridors with her.

In her ‘Afrika Dansı ya da Hastalığın ‘Öteki’yle Dansı’ (Afrika Dansı or The Dance of Illness with the ‘Other’), Seher Özkök reads ‘Afrika Dansı’ as a narrative that depicts resistance to patriarchy in which, while men are symbolized by the machine which forces the narrator to obey and conform, the narrative searches for an object of desire who rejects being a power holder but rather chooses to become a figure who will revolutionize the patriarchal norms.\(^{164}\) According to Özkök, the narrator’s search for an object of desire among the men in Africa who wear women’s clothes, or her imagining Beckett as an object

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\(^{163}\) *One Master, One World: Sevim Burak*, ed. by Filiz Özdem, (Istanbul: YKY, 2013), p.82.

of her love are all caused by this search. Both Beckett and the man she fell in love in Nigeria are opposite to the machine and his orders, and have the power to disturb the system and order.

According to Özkök, the narrator’s orderless papers and her tendency to destroy a normative form of narrative is put in opposition to the machine who calls for order. She analyses the machine’s loyalty to order with Julia Kristeva’s formulation of *symbolics* and the narrator’s attempt at destroying the order with *semiotics*. According to her reading, the machine becomes a symbol of patriarchy, forcing the narrator to conform while the narrator tries to destroy the systematized world of the machine.¹⁶⁵ Hence when the machine exclaims ‘I am free. You cannot pin me up on a paper’, this, according to Özkök, points to the narrator’s inability to change the form of the machine.¹⁶⁶

While I agree with Özkök’s reading of ‘Afrika Dansı’ as a story about resistance to patriarchy, I also argue that women resisting to men who have (and even are) the tool(s) of power is only one element of the story. When Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ is considered with the violent atmosphere of 1980 coup in the background, where bodies were violently forced to become docile through torture, the simple act of embracing the physical experiences, or the *lived body* becomes revolutionary in response to the hegemonic machines that reduce bodies into numbers. It replaces the image of the defined and fixed body with the image of a body that demolishes itself to construct itself again, only then to demolish itself again in an unending process. Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of an active and resistant body, one that is constantly in transformation and hence in becoming, in rejection of a fixed identity, function as a useful tool to explain the modes of resistance in Burak’s work. By connecting various forms of entrapment and resistance, Burak’s short story turns into a text of becoming-minoratarian and more specifically, a story of becoming-woman, becoming-patient, becoming- modernist writer and through a cultural appropriation, becoming a member of various Nigerian tribes and hence the style of the narrative as an example of minor literature. One that disrupts fixed identities, hegemony as well as linear and grand narratives...

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¹⁶⁵ Özkök, p.13.  
¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 21.
minorities under certain conditions, but that in itself does not make them becomings. 167

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define the term ‘minor’ not to refer to numbers but to refer to norm. ‘Women, for example, are a minority’, Colebrook explains, ‘not because there are fewer women, but because the standard term is that of ‘man’’. 168 The term also points to a constant process of becoming, moving and deterriorlatization. It is a constant transformation; with every new member ‘the group is mobalised’. 169 Accordingly, minor literature is one that does not follow the ‘major’ standards of what makes a story a story or what makes a movie a movie, but it ‘creates and transforms any notion of the standard’. 170 In their work on Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari define the three characteristics of minor literature as ‘the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation’. 171 It is, therefore, made of a language that always flights from the language of the norm of majority and it ‘finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation’. 172

In Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’, becoming-minoratarian is achieved in its form as well as in its content. The narrative moves multi-dimensionally. The orders of the machine are given in capital letters while the narrator’s thoughts interfere in parentheses. On the other hand, the medical results of heart screening are given in square blocks in a medical language throughout the story. When the narrator begins to dream about Africa and Beckett, the punctuation marks are replaced with slash signs. When the machine tries to obtain the writer-narrator’s papers of draft notes by attempting to seduce her, she hides her papers but feels worried that as she approaches the machine her papers rustle. The tension between the orders of the machine and the writer’s orderless papers is also represented by the design of the page. In his ‘Afrika Dansı’nın Makinesi’, Fatih Uslu points to the design of the rustling of the pages as an example of such clash. On the one hand, the orders of the machine are placed in the middle of the page, with words written in capital letters. On the other hand, the words ‘kağıtlar’ (papers) and ‘hışırdıyor’ (rustling) are scattered around the

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168 Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, xxv.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
172 Ibid, p.17.
orders as if attacking the linear line of the language of the machine.  

As the hospital machine asks over and over again the same questions and give the same orders with different words that often become absurd and meaningless, the authority and order end up in a continuous cycle. The machine is not only absurd, but also ‘immortal’; it will go on to another hospital asking the same questions in the very same order. It will keep on collecting dead bodies and it will keep on asking for its meaningless order. Reminiscent of Beckett’s characters who are unable to move, trapped in rooms or in unending cycles, the machine is unable to die and unable to do anything else. In ‘Nothing Has Changed’ Mladen Dolar discusses the sense that nothing makes in Beckett’s writing, noting ‘The words have to be deprived of their magic, hollowed, their meaning has to be subtracted from them so that they become scarce and empty, like senseless sounds, reduced to cliches (dead words in a seemingly living language)’. For Dolar, such ‘reduction of meaning’ is exactly what makes more sense. ‘The point of Waiting for Godot’ he suggests, ‘is precisely that Godot comes, he keeps coming all the time, and, if it seems that he doesn’t it’s only because we have been expecting him from the wrong quarters’. Burak’s short story also points to the system that the machine itself is trapped in. The absurdity of its questions makes meaning flee.

The narrator, however, resists the fixed identity of the machine by changing form

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174 Mladen Dolar, ‘Nothing Has Changed’ in Beckett and Nothing, ed. by Daniela Caselli (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp.48-64 (p.51).
175 Ibid, p.54.
and going through a process of becoming through her illness. As Parla suggests, the story becomes a story about metamorphosis and the narrative itself joins the African Dance by its unconventional order of lines. This according to Parla is what makes the text political.\textsuperscript{176} While the machine is portrayed powerful enough to see through her, and the results of what the machine sees are given in a medical language in clean-cut boxes at the corners of the pages with a medical language, ‘Rheumatic fever at the age of 10, in the Aort focus $\frac{1}{4}$ injection bruit, from AZ.P.Z. 1$^{st}$ sound kopulation’, the narrator instead sees her heart in metamorphosis:

\begin{quote}
It is looking into that dark hole/ deep into it/it sees my lungs like a bunch of grapes/ hidden behind the bunch of grapes/ that hole, it looks into/ it sees its mouth/ it opens and closes like a human mouth/ in that bottom, whatever the mouth that opens and closes like a human mouth says, it is covered/it is covered whatever it says/ the seaweed in the depths of the sea, waves/hidden among those seaweeds/ the swelled purple veins/ the capillary lines/ it looks at your big fancy heart that is hidden among your purple lungs like a bunch of grapes/ then blood comes out of the mouth drop by drop/ the mouth closes/ it disappears in the blood sea in the depths of a red sea.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

In his ‘Afrika Dansı’nın Makinesi’ (The Machine of African Dance) Fatih Altuğ reads the machine of the story, in line with Deleuze and Guattari’s machine, as a heterogeneous assemblage, which rejects any signifier that attempts to fixate it with a certain identity like man, doctor, lover, mad, child, protector, killer.\textsuperscript{178} Instead, he suggests, the machine bears all the possibilities of identities in its entirety. According to Altuğ the relationship between the machine and the narrator is not one that positions them as two clashing forces, but rather, the narrator and the machine are parts of the same assemblage and the process of becoming. He points to the machine’s ability to reveal the narrator’s heart as a proof of a unison between the machine and the narrator, making them two parts of an assemblage. I, however, argue that while the machine in the short story is one that forces the narrator to be part of the homogeneous sameness, the narrator goes into a process of becoming to resist the machine. In other words, they are not part of the same assemblage, but rather two clashing forces.

In this respect, the X-Ray scene does not portray the machine’s becoming of the narrator, but rather it reveals the narrator’s resistance to the machine’s attempt to reduce her into numbers or nameless bodies. Similar to the X-Ray scene in Thomas Mann’s \textit{Magic Mountain}, here too, the difference between what the machine sees in X-Ray and what the

\textsuperscript{176} Parla, p.25.
\textsuperscript{177} Burak, 9.
\textsuperscript{178} Altuğ, ‘Afrika Dansı’nın Makinesi’. 
narrator sees create the gap between the lived body and the medical body. The continuation 
of the medical results throughout the whole story side by side with the narrator’s active 
imagination of her physical experiences of doing a juju dance, losing herself in the rhythm 
of drums or even taking Beckett to various places in Turkey and in Nigeria reveals a 
resistance to ‘the body’s reduction to mere text or code, insisting instead on the body’s 
fleshly, visceral nature.’ This theme gains more visibility with the machine and people 
who work for the machine at the hospital, beginning to collect dead bodies from not only 
the rooms of the hospital but from all over the city.

The machine keeps asking
Is there any dead on the first floor
Yes
If there are 800 people in beds in SAINT NICHOLAS Hospital
It asks all 800 of them All 800 of them are going to die
And
The machine asks to the janitor
Are there any other corpses
The janitor will put somebody else’s dead body who died in another room at the hospital into a 
plastic bag (nobody should see it or else they will be sad) to take it out of the room/and will put 
their shoes too into a different plastic bag (their shoes are flip-flops made out of plastic)/ will not 
put them into the same plastic bag with the corpse

When the broader political atmosphere of the period considered, ‘Afrika Dansi’ becomes a 
text that not only resists to the medical observation of the body, but through the orders of 
the machine that are reminiscent of repetitive police questioning, it also resists to the 
meaning that the bodies had obtained. As opposed to being only numbers or bodies that 
would be put into plastic bags for nobody to see, the narrator, instead, presents desiring and 
living bodies that resist fixed identities, definitions and groupings. Burak’s introduction of 
Beckett as a character in ‘Afrika Dansi,’ also creates an organic relation between her short 
story and modernist writing which as Saunders, Maude and Macnaughton note ‘privileges 
the lived and experiencing body, highlighting the body’s materiality and the subject’s 
contingency’.


180 Burak, p.25.

and the Body, Ulrika Maude looks at the materiality of the body in Beckett’s literature, and notes:

The bodily experiences in Beckett’s work, especially before the late prose, are often brought to the reader’s or spectator’s attention through characters’ difficulties in moving, in the falling rolling, limping and crawling that recur in Beckett’s writing. Similarly Beckett foregrounds the body by making normal bodily functions, such as eating and excreting [..] seldom appear normal or unconditioned in his work. This said, however, we should not see Beckett’s oeuvre as ‘a portrait gallery of cripples’, but rather as one of the most serious efforts in literature to bring the body to the forefront.

While Burak’s short story points to a lived body, resisting the reduction of bodies into numbers or their entrapment in mechanized orders, she does not condemn her narrator with the same faith that the machine has. As opposed to the machine that is trapped in its own system without being able to stop or die, the narrator, notes that she will indeed be free at the end of a few weeks spent with the machine. She will rejoin life, go back to her African Dance while the machine is forever doomed without any hope of movement or change. The narrator not only sees a more hopeful future for herself, but she also includes Beckett in her journey towards freedom. As the narrator imagines Beckett to be in the room, she remarks that she does not want to see a passive and quiet Beckett but rather one that lives among the people, communicating with them. She wants to see a ‘living’ Beckett ‘among other people’. She does not want to ‘keep Beckett to herself’.

182 She wants to see him among other people, contacting and talking to the others. She wants to see him in her life, going to a cinema or to Papirus restaurant where members of the Turkish literary circle go. 183 As opposed to her crippled state, reminiscent of Beckett’s literature, she, instead, wants to see an active Beckett in her life and makes him join her dance, her own process of becoming.

Dance, in Burak’s short story in this respect gains importance as it, too, functions to undermine the calls of order of the machine. The juju dance that the narrator does to attack the machine becomes her own weapon in the face of her crippling physical condition both bodily and contextually. Dance also functions as a gateway to the Deleuzian notion of becoming which becomes possible through the interaction of forces ‘that allow any form of life to become what it is (territorialise) can also allow it to become what it is not

182 Burak, p.19. 183 Ibid.
It requires a constant movement and multiplicity in a continuous state of flux. Accordingly, the narrator of ‘Afrika Dansı’ is constantly in the phase of becoming, her identity is always in flux. When the narrator is afraid that she will become one of the dead bodies who are taken out of the room secretly, she asks ‘Am I going to be “Dead Mives Karub is coming”? As ‘Mives Karub’ is ‘Sevim Burak’ written backwards, her whole identity seems to have turned back to front. She then imagines putting on a Balwalwa mask, finds herself in the Saint Nicolas Hospital in Lagos, and with the hooked nose of her mask she challenges everyone. She then changes her mask instead to a Balumba mask and begins to do traditional juju dance. Along with her, all the other juju dancers come dancing out of the woods and attack the machine in the Saint Nicholas Hospital. The narrator becomes part of the dancing crowd, the multiplicity.

In ‘Primitivism in Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus’, Andrew Lattas problematizes the way primitivite society is likened to a pack, deprived of individuation in Deleuze and Guattari’s work in which they write, ‘If we consider primitive societies, we see that there is very little that operates through the face: their semiotic is nonsignifying, nonsubjective, essentially collective, polyvocal, and corporeal, playing on very diverse forms and substances’. Lattas also focuses on their use of mask, suggesting that in Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding, masks ‘ensure the head’s belonging to the body, rather than making it a face’ and ‘connect the body not to faciality but to becomings-animal’. Although Burak’s short story does not explicitly attribute primitivism to the tribes whose cultures the narrator appropriates, Burak, however, positions various Nigerian cultures in opposition to the totalitarian machine and its orders. While the machine is framed with its system and relentless order, the cultures of various Nigerian tribes are positioned as disruptive forces to such totalitarian order and system. In line with Lattas’ criticism of Deleuze and Guattari’s theorisation of primitivism, Burak, too, attributes multiplicities to the Nigerian tribes by portraying them as ‘war machines of metamorphosis’ in opposition to the ‘State Apparatuses of identity’ as forced by the machine.

For Deleuze and Guattari, in minor literature ‘everything takes on a collective
value’ and every particular within the group effects the overall majority. They suggest, ‘Becoming-Jewish, becoming-woman, etc., therefore imply two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority’,\textsuperscript{188} therefore becoming requires the ability to deterritorialize and revolutionize the majority in a continuous movement.\textsuperscript{189} In doing so, one can ‘become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one’s own language’ and hence create a minor literature.\textsuperscript{190} Sevim Burak’s narrator deterritorializes the normative and fixed identities of majority through a multiplicity of becomings that move from one minor group to the other.

‘instead of suggesting to BECKETT going to PAPIRUS/ the literary circles/in order not to be ashamed by them/I tell him that I like walking on my own by the Atlantic Ocean/ I like walking around by the NIGER Delta and on the drifts by the river mouths/with the tribes called IJAW/the IJAW/another group in the east, KALABARI are so similar/I suggest to BECKETT walking around in this room by holding hands/HAVE YOU SEEN ROOTS’

[…]

‘If you’d like let’s walk around in this room by holding hands with you/ I would like you to see the movie, REBEKA/I would also like to see you with somebody else/what expression does his face take/what does he say to his mother when he is angry/I would like to see you in the BALWALWA tribe of NIGERIA’\textsuperscript{191}

By deciding not to take Beckett to Papirus ‘in order not to be ashamed by them’ she rejects the Turkish literary tradition and instead takes Beckett to her own path to introduce him to the Ijaw tribes which she feels a sense of belonging. By desiring to see Beckett in Balwalwa tribe, she makes him part of her own deterritorialization. For Deleuze and Guattari, a majority is always ‘linked to a state of power and domination’\textsuperscript{192} while minority is defined by ‘its capacity to […] draw for itself lines of fluctuation that open up a gap and separate it from the axiom constituting a redundant majority’.\textsuperscript{193} The narrator’s question on whether or not Beckett has seen the television series, \textit{Roots} (1977) whose plot addresses Alex Haley’s family history of liberation from enslavement reveals her becoming-minoritarian even more. Her desire for Beckett to see Alfred Hitchcock movie, \textit{Rebecca} (1940), an adaptation of Daphne du Maurier’s novel with the same title, which revolves

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid, p.340.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, p.339.
\textsuperscript{190} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Kafka}, p.19
\textsuperscript{191} Burak, pp.22-23.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
around a story of a young woman haunted by her husband’s previous wife whom she later finds out has been killed by her husband, is once more derived from the same process. The narrator likens the murdered first wife to a chained slave and explains that she saw a dream of herself being in Manderley Castle and hence connects her own entrapment in a small hospital room under the oppression of the dominant machine to the entrapment of slaves and women. Her juju dance with the tribe with whom she attacks the machine becomes a fight against not only the authority figures at the hospital, but also the state of power and domination in general, or ‘majoritarian’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s words.

Beckett disappears on her way to the surgery. The narrator, realizing that she does not need his physical existence but only his ideas, fights against the machine’s dominance once more, this time more forcefully by remembering that she got her face painted with paint that she bought from Bambala tribe. Dressing herself completely in Yoruba outfits, she gets ready for the machine as if getting ready for a war. She misses crowds and imagines herself finding the love of her life in the crowd. As she goes through her surgery and as her body begins to dissolve, bringing her close to death, her transformation of becoming, multiplying and her assemblage reaches its peak. ‘It is the becoming of everybody’, Verena Conley notes, ‘In the process of becoming minor, the figure of death (nobody) gives way to life (everybody).’

‘I am watching my heart on the television screen of the surgery room/blood is coming from my groin/ from artery/they keep pressing thick cotton/as the doctor sticks the syringe to my heart/ as he sticks the hook-shaped fishing line among the seaweeds/I am thinking/I am a person of crowds/ I will make my choice among the crowds/colourful/diverse people, I will see them all and choose the most beautiful one’

‘Afrika Dansı’ celebrates lived body and fights against the universal, totalitarian and majoritarian machine, be it a doctor, or a man, or a colonialist, with her ever-lasting juju dance. In this respect, the text embraces the sick body and patient-hood; turning it into a weapon to disrupt the order and system. When the broader political atmosphere is considered with three decades of coup d’etats, marked by torture, imprisonment and execution, in Scarry’s words, ‘the most small and benign bodily acts becomes a form of agency,’ and hence giving illness the potential to function as revolutionary.

4. ‘I-am, I-am, I-am’ - In the Void of a Lost/Found I

Aslı Erdoğan who produced her prose fiction in the 1990s focuses on illness and

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194 Conley, p.165.
195 Burak, p.35.
physical wounds as one of her major themes. The lost or damaged organs in Erdoğan’s short stories and novels not only effect the daily lives of her protagonists, but also they represent a past identity that has been lost through the loss of body parts. Such lost identity, like the lost body part, however, never stops haunting the present body. In her ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ the lost eye of the narrator gives her a new identity as ‘the ghost’ of the town, while her search for her lost eye becomes a search for her native country as well as her former lover. In Erdoğan’s ‘Wooden Birds’, a patient in a sanatorium, Filiz, or Felicita as the fellow patients call her, goes out on a walking trip with the other patients, what they refer to as the ‘Amazon Express’. Filiz feels unable to cope with the walk, her lungs suffering throughout the trip. She likens herself to a wooden bird, unable to fly. The material body in both of these short stories plays a central role as a space of memory. The failure of these bodies to fulfil daily tasks turns into a haunting of the protagonists’ past.

In Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, makes a distinction between ‘the habitual body’ and ‘the body at this moment’ by discussing the example of phantom limb and argues that ‘In the [habitual body] appear manipulatory movements which have disappeared from the [body at this moment], and the problem how I can have the sensation of still possessing a limb which I no longer have amounts to finding out how the habitual body can act as for the body at this moment’. According to Merleau-Ponty, habitual body forms the structure of our experience in the world; ‘personal time’ is imprinted on the habitual body, arresting the present body (or body at this moment). He notes, ‘Of course this fixation does not merge into memory; it even excludes memory in so far as the latter spreads out in front of us, like a picture, a former experience, whereas this past which remains our true present does not leave us but remains constantly hidden behind our gaze instead of being displayed before it’. In Ulrika Maude’s words, ‘We are dealing with a bodily memory, an organic intelligence, whose applicability reaches far beyond the experiences of mutilation’.

The bodily memory plays a crucial role in Erdoğan’s ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ as the protagonist’s loss of her eye is equated to a lost past. As her past and hence her former self become her phantom limbs whose loss the brain resists, she, too, reduces herself into being a ‘phantom’ who wanders in the old streets of the city in the darkness, constantly in

196 Merleau-Ponty, p.95.
197 Ibid, p.96.
198 Ibid.
199 Maude, Beckett, Technology and the Body, p.13
search of a long-lost imagery of her native country or her long-gone lover. ‘what has once been experienced and what can never truly be left behind irreversibly enchain’ in her body as she, a stranger in her native country Turkey as well as in her new city Geneva, loses one of her eyes which reduces her body and her identity into a gaze. She describes her lost eye as the void, in opposition to her seeing eye. The seeing eye is equated to light and day while the lost eye becomes part of night and darkness, ready to swallow her whole being. While she searches for the lost meaning, her physical body simultaneously acts as a reminder of the past. The short story collection, Miraculous Mandarin takes its title from a framed story that the protagonist narrates within ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ which points to the embodied nature of the protagonist’s recollections. Originally written by Melchior Lengyel and forming the story of Béla Bartok’s ballet with the same title, it narrates the story of a mandarin whose physical wounds become visible and deadly only when he receives affection. In Erdoğan’s short story, Miraculous Mandarin becomes the reminder of the bodily memory and the embodied subjectivity.

Julia Kristeva’s exploration of depression in her Black Sun functions as a useful tool to closely scrutinize the place of the narrator’s eye in connection to her identity. In this work, Kristeva discusses depression in connection to melancholy and suggests that depression is a symptom of ‘not knowing how to lose’. Freud’s formulation of melancholy which points to a loss within the subjectivity, or the loss of an object that is experienced as part of the subject plays a crucial role in Kristeva’s theory. Freud notes in his ‘Melancholy and Mourning’, ‘In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself’. With the lack of boundaries between the lost object and subject, the melancholic person feels the loss as part of their own subjectivity. Accordingly, Kristeva explains the loss of the erotic object due to ‘(unfaithfulness or desertion by the lover or husband, divorce, etc.)’ as castration which threatens ‘[the melancholic woman’s] entire being – body and especially soul’ and ‘threatens to empty her whole psychic life’ since it is ‘felt by the woman as an assault on her geniality’.

For Kristeva, such a loss is ‘experienced as an inner void’ and ‘she remains constantly

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203 Kristeva, pp.81-82.
restrained by an aching physic wrapping, anesthetized, as if “dead”. Haunted by the memories of a lost lover, the narrator of ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ not only wanders in the streets of the city, but she also goes to the exact spots where she has specific memories with her long-gone lover. She defines herself as ‘a void in the heart of life’ walking around in the streets of Geneva ‘like a ghost of a woman who was murdered in the previous century’. It is not, however, a former lover that the narrator has lost. In the streets of Geneva she also searches for her native city, Istanbul which she remembers with a melancholy for her girlhood years. It is not a fully experienced girlhood that she pictures but one that she never had a chance to experience due to gender norms of her society. It is only during sex that she completely feels full and writes ‘I-am, I-am, I-am’, but once it is over, she goes back to the feeling of loss. She, therefore, always looks for a Thing in her dreams that she can never find. In her waking state, too, she is forever melancholic, continuing to look for something that she never finds in the streets of Geneva. The impossibility of obtaining the Thing marks her as a foreigner regardless of whether she is in her native city or in Geneva. In Kristeva’s words:

The spectacular collapse of meaning with depressive persons – and, at the limit, the meaning of life – allows us to assume that they experience difficulty integrating the universal signifying sequence, that is, language. In the best of cases, speaking beings and their language are like one: is not speech our ‘second nature’? In contrast, the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin; melancholy persons are foreigners in their mother tongue. They have lost the meaning – the value – of their mother tongue for want of losing the mother. The dead language they speak, which foreshadows their suicide, conceals a Thing buried alive.

As the narrator feels completely excluded from the world, her status as a foreigner both in her native country and Geneva finds its representation in the opening scene where she comes across four Turkish tourists. The short story repeatedly presents gender norms as roles that she feels unable to fulfil. The story opens with the scene where four men from her native country Turkey, surround her in a dim street only to realize that instead of beauty, there is a ‘void’ in her face, a lost eye. One of them murmurs, ‘What a shame! She obviously used to be a beautiful girl’. The loss of her eye strips her of from her

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204 Ibid, p.82.
205 Erdoğan, ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ (In the Void of a Lost Eye) in Mucizevi Mandarin (Miraculous Mandarin) (İstanbul: Everest, 2009), pp.1-80 (p.38).
206 Ibid, p.52.
208 Ibid.
209 Kristeva, p.53.
‘beautiful girl’ status and hence, she is not regarded as a desirable body any longer.
Similarly when a group of American soldiers stop her to ask her for a recommendation of a
nightclub, one of them exclaims, ‘How would this girl know?’

It is not, however, only others who regard her sexuality as non-existent. When later a handsome man approaches
her, asking to accompany her, she finds the idea unacceptable even though she finds the
man attractive. She, therefore, completely rejects her active sexuality. The eye of the
narrator turns into a ‘dead sun’ which functions as her ‘universe, jail, bottomless pit’.

A similar theme can be observed in another short story by Aslı Erdoğan, ‘Wooden
Birds’ which takes place in a sanatorium in Black Woods in Germany. The main
protagonist whose perspective the narrator focalizes, Filiz or Felicita as the other patients
call her, is a Turkish political émigré with a PhD in history who suffers from asthma. In her
first Saturday when she is allowed to spend two hours outside the hospital after eight
months of intense treatment, a group of patients invite her to a secret adventure which they
name ‘Amazon Express’. Reluctant to feel excited about this secret trip, she however feels
unable to reject the offer in the face of Dijana’s excitement. The trip is made by six
patients, three of whom suffer from tuberculosis while the other three suffer from asthma.
These women, like the narrator of ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’, are narrated as only
reminders of what they used to be, leftovers of their previous healthy selves. One of the
German patients Beatrice ‘with her chestnut hair cropped short, her wistful eyes that
seemed to be always looking for something she had lost and her adolescent body that
resembled a withered tree’ has a ruined face despite her young age due to ‘heroin,
prostitution, jaundice, tuberculosis...’

Argentinean Graciella, ‘distinguished by birth and wealth and unanimously described with epithets such as “elite, graceful, cultured” amongst lung patients’, is another political émigré who goes through imprisonment and torture
before she develops asthma. Bosnian Dijana, on the other hand, is young and full of life.
Like the narrator of ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ she, too, becomes ‘undesirable’ due to her
physical condition.

About a couple of months ago, returning from the medical director’s office, Filiz had seen
Dijana in one of the phone booths on the ground floor. Grasping the phone with both hands,
she was talking and at the same time crying without a pause. At first she thought Dijana

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212 Ibid, p.62.
213 Aslı Erdoğan, ‘Wooden Birds’
<http://www.writerscentrenorwich.org.uk/symphony/extension/richtext_redactor/getfile/?name=8d506cbe ac4b95ed9dced26a975454e68.pdf> [accessed 19 May 2017].
had received yet more terrible news from Bosnia—it was in one of these booths that Dijana had been informed by a deep voice at the end of a line frequently cut off that her sister had passed away in Bosnia. Fortunately it wasn’t so this time. Dijana’s last boyfriend, Hans, the tall blade, was more than fed up with this consumptive ruin of a woman with noisy breathing, bags under her eyes and his dreary hospital visits. The two women had jointly written five letters to Hans, but Filiz’s sensitive and impressive pen hadn’t helped, and no reply had ensued.214

As opposed to Dijana, the narrator of ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ adopts her new identity not as an active agent but as an observant who is not allowed to take part in daily life. She watches people sitting in the cafes, restaurants as ‘they breathe, change, do, build, want, mate, get angry, cry, laugh, survive’ as if watching an alien scene in which she does not belong.215 Later, she prepares a list of all the associations she makes with her eye which suggests that the loss of her eye points to a bigger loss, the loss of the I.

EYE – gaze – desire – loss
EYE – mirror – others – cliff – absence
EYE – pit – grave – darkness
EYE – blindness – prophecy
EYE – sun – desert – emptiness – loneliness
EYE – egg – mother – life
EYE – light – world – pain216

In another scene where she goes out for a dinner with her colleagues on the day she loses her eye, she sits by the table as a symbol of abject with pus and fluid dripping through the bandages as her male colleagues find themselves in competition to seduce Maria, a Spanish woman who functions as a doppelganger of the narrator’s naive, almost childish flirting capabilities. The narrator, who is a writer like the protagonists of Sevim Burak’s ‘Afrika Dansı’ or Tezer Özlü’s Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri, creates a character, another doppelganger for whom she fails to write a story, thinking that she would never truly understand what it would be like to be her. Unlike the narrator, the character whom the narrator names Michelle is a beautiful young woman around the age of twenty two, a native Genevan who obtains everything she wants in life. Like the marks in the mandarin’s body or the lost eye of the narrator, Michelle, too, has a mark on her body that represents her subjectivity: a tattoo of a tiger on her shoulder.

In her Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başıklama Jale Parla looks at the central point that the writer and metamorphosis occupy in the history of Turkish literature, suggesting

214 Ibid.
that in the two types of writer characters that are depicted in these works, while the first group consists of a figuration of ‘successful’ writer with whom the ideological aspect of the text is revealed in an allegorical manner, as Fredric Jameson puts in his ‘Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital’, the second group includes failed writers - *mangue* writers- whose attempt and failure to ‘become’ a writer in accordance with their high standards, also problematizes a crisis of identity of the society. Unlike the former group, the failed writers of the latter group are not portrayed as powerful and authoritative figures of intelligentsia who point to the right direction to take. They do not lead or rule, but rather narrate texts of metamorphosis which do not allow ‘boundaries of ideologies’. Such metamorphosis, Parla notes, includes the destruction of the boundaries of identities and even bodies. They call for a transformation into objects or plants, ‘dehumanization’, and/or destruction of bodies. Writing, Parla argues, calls for such metamorphosis as exemplified in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, especially in the scene where Leopold Bloom attempts to explain *metempsychosis* to his wife Molly (or with Molly’s pronunciation, ‘met-him-pike-hoses’). With his capacity to take any form, Parla notes, Prometheus ‘is the God that an artist has to meet and embrace according to Joyce’. When the connection of socio-political culture and identity of an artist considered, the example of Turkish modernization calls for a full-force metamorphosis with its fast-pace cultural transformation from Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey, rather than a hybridity as formulated by Homi Bhabha. Especially after the 1960s, Parla points to the physical violence in these texts that is created by the process of metamorphosis. She notes, ‘We don’t need to look too far to find the reasons of such physical and spiritual violence that metamorphosis includes: These are the marks of torture, applied by two military coups and their follow-up junta governments’. Aslı Erdoğan’s short stories ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ and ‘Wooden Birds’, too, are texts where failed writers are in a phase of metamorphosis. Their illnesses and lost body parts become points of violent transformation. The habitual body not only keeps the memory, but also exactly at the point when the present body fails to fulfil the demands of the habitual body, puts the subject into a transformation.

217 Parla, p.11.
220 Ibid, p.15.
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid, p.17.
In ‘Wooden Birds’ women’s Amazon Express ends up by the side of a river whose stream becomes fast and dangerous, with women rushing to a specific spot. To Filiz’s surprise, all the members of the Amazon Express begin to ‘[strike] pose[s] peculiar to third-rate porno magazines’ with ‘“pre-orgasm” expression[s] enraptured with sexual pleasure’ on their faces. As women exhibit their wounds in their sexy poses as if they are dangerous and mysterious sirens, four young men, healthy and robust university students appear on the river in their rowing boats. Women whose sexuality has been cut out by the marks of their illnesses, reclaim and exhibit their bodies to the world like Amazons who cut out one of their breasts to be able to fight. When Filiz finally gains her courage to join in the game, she is transformed into a wooden bird whose heavy wings are unable to fly.

Like the wings of a wooden bird that had long ago forgotten to fly, they spread sideways, pausing and with difficulty, but immediately exhausted, closed upon her head. Like broken wings they collapsed upon each other.

The narrator of the ‘Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda’ too, feels the limits of her own body. Due to medical reasons, the doctor forbids her to read, swim, watch television or smoke. She, however, finds a new form of existence in the void. She feels entrapped in her own claustrophobic body only to realize her own vitality even more. The transformation comes from the loss of boundaries. She, as a relentless gaze, finds herself in the terrains of a new bodily existence. Stripped of her social identity, she now fully feels her body. With the pain stopping her from feeling anything else, she feels her vitality more so than anything else. In this uncanny new world, the sounds of the street are mixed with the sounds of her heartbeat and she experiences her body in a way she only feels during sex.

I’m listening to my steps, my heartbeats are in rhythm and reassuring. I-am, I-am, I-am... In both of these short stories, the inability of the bodies to fulfil their daily tasks is emphasised. These bodies are not flawless representations of a fit nation, but rather embodied individuals who are in physical pain, feeling out of breath, struggling to walk. Their transformation into abject beings opens the possibility for them to be who they are not. Exactly at the point when their bodies make themselves felt through their failure of fulfilling daily tasks, they find themselves in metamorphosis.

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224 Erdoğan, ‘Wooden Birds’.
225 Erdoğan, ‘Yitik Göz’, p.36.
Conclusion:

With the emergence of three coup d’états and trauma caused by on-going torture and oppression, the meanings of bodies changed in the post-1960 period, drastically. Bodies were from then on not representative of a healthy and fit nation, but they were rather planes where the state could exercise its authority by means of torture and imprisonment. In the 1970s, with the spread of left-wing politics among university students and workers’ unions, feminism, too, entered into the scene with women not only demanding a more equal society among classes, but also equal society among different sexes. Bodies, and more specifically sexuality, became terrains where women demanded freedom. While there was an increase in the production of the works that functioned as tools for propaganda for the left-wing movement, following the coup of 1970, works that mourned for the lost cause of the movement, but nevertheless idolising revolutionary characters appeared. Works that pointed to existential crisis as a response to the oppressive politics were also produced in a growing trend.

Unlike the texts that have been discussed in previous chapters, works of Tezer Özlü, Sevim Burak and Aslı Erdoğan use their skins as weapons to resist the oppressive authority of the state. Their personal fights become highly political. They are not portrayed as victims of their illnesses or degeneration; while the violence of the authority is visible in these texts, the protagonists respond to the oppression through physical transformation and metamorphosis.
Conclusion

This research has scrutinized ideological and discursive constructions of physiological, neurological and psychological diseases in women writers’ fiction in relation to the nation-building project of Turkey in the twentieth century. While modern technologies of power instrumentalize biopolitics in order to regulate population, this research has focused on bodies of exception, namely sick bodies and their potential to undermine regulative normativity. Turkey, in this respect, has proven to be a valuable example as it has implicitly and explicitly taken Western European formulations of nation-state modernity as a model, identifying itself as a nation of healthy, sturdy and young bodies. Considering that the novel as a form emerged in Turkish as an arena of negotiation for modernization and Westernization movements following the Tanzimat edict, this project has investigated the crossing point between biology and modernity: how sick bodies are narrativized and aestheticized in various literary forms from national romances to melodramas and modernist texts.

In order to understand ideologies behind the production of various discourses on bodies in literary works, this research has first of all investigated the medical discourse of the early republican period. Following the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic ideologically distanced itself from its Ottoman past, and defined its fundamental characteristics as a young and modern nation-state. The ideal citizen of the Turkish nation was naturally hard-working, strong, healthy, sturdy and modern: while the mission of the new republic was to ensure that the Turkish citizens would cultivate such natural strength, the mission of every citizen was to protect their physical and mental health, and devote their lives to the wellbeing of the nation. In addition to the aid of social sciences such as history, linguistics and anthropology, the ideologues of such definitions also instrumentalized medicine and biology in order to prove the essentialist and racial characteristics of the Turkish race. Using hereditary traits as defining prerequisites of the members of the nation, however, resulted in excluding the members who did not fit into such definitions. This project, therefore, is an attempt to understand the position of those unhealthy members of the nation when nation-building discourse approached good health as proof of being an ideal citizen. It has, in other words, asked the question: If protecting one’s health is a prerequisite of being an ideal citizen, then does being sick mean failing as a citizen?
The official social Darwinist and determinist ideology of the state had various results. First of all, it gave every member of the nation a **biological responsibility**. From the moment of birth, members of the nation had to cultivate their full potential not for individualistic reasons but for the greater good of the nation. As a result, individuality was sacrificed for the benefit of the community, turning individuals into cogs in the machine whose purpose were to become ideal citizens to ensure the betterment of the coming generations. Influenced by the determinist and Social Darwinist discourse of Western Europe, engineers of this official ideology began to define the new Turkish citizen, while at the same time defining those who were excluded from such definitions. In the medical writing of the period, hereditary diseases as well as criminal tendencies were used to define undesirable citizens. Acting as a social engineering device, medical discourse not only pointed to unhealthy members of the nation as degenerates, but also saw their degeneration as the mark of a sickly Ottoman past. The discussion on "racial diseases" was a dominant subject in the engineering of the nation. Racial diseases not only included mental or physical diseases (with alcoholism and syphilis being major focus) but also, character traits such as laziness or tendencies towards criminality were also grouped under this category. While in the last century of the Ottoman Empire such social Darwinist discourse had already begun to be voiced, after the foundation of the Republic scientists who undertook researches to support claims about the characteristics of the Turkish nation were also active in parliament as *members* of the parliament. In other words, they not only had the tools to create scientific knowledge, but also to regulate laws based on their research. Doctors, in other words, were held responsible not only for healing individuals but also for healing society. Protecting one's health was defined as one of the main responsibilities of a citizen, and the ideal citizen was described as young, athletic, healthy and fashioned in Western European outfits.

Women’s bodies, in the meantime, were treasured as the bearers of future generations: they were not only expected to give birth to healthy children but also to raise them in accordance with the principles of Kemalism. Their bodies were to represent the true characteristics of the nation; they were to be productive, healthy and sacrificing. Women who chose to pursue a professional career, on the other hand, functioned as the signs of a civilized country. For this reason, this project has specifically focused on women writers’ narratives of physical and mental illness in order to understand how they contested
or reproduced such formulation of healthy bodies in relation to ideal citizenship. The texts I look at in this research, intentionally or unintentionally, challenge the gender construction of the state, and instead allow the materiality of the body and carnal experience to tackle identity as a gendered construct.

As able bodies became a prerequisite for being an ideal citizen, sick bodies were included in this discourse through their exclusion. They were not completely reduced to *zoē*, in Agambenian terms, but they were also not treated as bios. They, instead, became bare lives who were included in the symbolic system of nation by being excluded and by being positioned in the margins. Looking at the modernity and modernization of Turkey by focusing on the discourse around sick bodies, therefore, provide us with the opportunity to reveal who and what was excluded from the definition of a nation-state. The potentiality of the body to be unwell becomes an insistent reminder of the corporeal regardless of the ideological formulations of the discursive body.

The place of literary works, especially the novel as a genre, gains importance in the modernization project of Turkey, since from the first novels of the *Tanzimat* period of the Ottoman Empire to the early republican texts, novels functioned as mediums where authors took on guiding roles; and spread, formulated, contested or reproduced officially prompted ideologies. The ideology of nation consisting of healthy and sturdy bodies informed literary works produced in the first half of the century. One of the writers this research focuses on, Halide Edib, for instance, not only acted as a vanguard figure in the formulation of the ideal woman and ideal man through her works of fiction, but also health and illness became major subjects in this formulation. In her *oeuvre*, Halide Edib rejects the corporeal existence of her heroines and turns their bodies, instead, into images of embodied values of communities. This image functions as a normative and regulative ideal in defining women's behaviours as well as their state of health. An early example by Halide Edib, *Handan*, for instance, portrays the image of a woman who suffers from her worldly, carnal desires. Well educated, opinionated and witty Handan rejects being only the image of an ideal woman and insists on her corporeal desires. While she searches for a man who would desire her whole being in morally acceptable grounds, all three men in her life fail to fulfil the conditions of being ideal men.

Similarly in Halide Edib’s later novels, her female characters continue to function as representations of the “true” characteristics of the nation, and the novels are often
narrated by the heroes who turn into ideal men through their growing love for the heroines. Halide Edib's works, therefore, not only create heroines who function as role models for the nation, they also show men how to be ideal members of the nation. In *The Shirt of Flame*, for instance, the corporeal existence of the heroine is completely left behind and the female protagonist of the novel, Ayesha becomes the "personified emblem" of "the bloody humiliation and bitter calamity imposed on the Turkish nation."¹ Through her ideal existence, she has the power to reformulate the heroes as members of the Turkish nation.

Halide Edib’s *Mev’ut Hüküm*, on the other hand, reveals the tendency towards materialism in the socio-political culture of the second constitutional era with Emile Zola’s works occupying a central role. Dedicating her work to the soul of Emile Zola, Halide Edib defines those unfit for society as its burden and a threat to its well-being. This is perhaps Halide Edib's most corporeal novel in which she condemns the desire of the flesh as one of the most dangerous tests for “sincere and piously inclined souls.”² Through her narration of a romantic story between a heroic doctor Kasım Şinasi and the sickly heroine who suffers from a venereal disease as well as hereditary madness, she manages to point to not only the dangers of the flesh in personal relationships, but in a broader social context.

The image of weeping woman in her early works, however, is replaced with the image of healthy and sporty women who work for the betterment of the Turkish nation as exemplified by her *Tatarcık* or *Kalb Ağrısı*. Health and illness, therefore, play crucial roles in Halide Edib's works with sickly heroines becoming healthier as they leave their materialist and individualistic desires behind for the sake of the collectivity. In this respect Halide Edib's oeuvre can be perceived as a portrait gallery of embodied spirits who redefine the regulative woman over and over again in accordance with nation-making ideology as they are transformed from fragile romantic heroines in sick chambers to healthy and fit daughters of the republic.

While Halide Edib’s national romances have occupied the centre of the literary canon to this day, melodramas have been in the margins of the canon despite their broad readership. First emerging following the French Revolution in France, examples of melodramas appeared in the Ottoman Empire for the first time during the *Tanzimat* period. As Fatih Mehmet Uslu notes, the structure of these early Ottoman melodramas functioned

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in revealing the clash between the new and old world orders in the process of transformation from the monarchy to a parliamentary system.\footnote{Mehmet Fatih Uslu, “Melodram ve Komedi: Osmanlı’da Türkçe ve Ermenice Modern Dramatik Edebiyatlar” (Melodrama and Comedy: Turkish and Armenian Modern Dramatic Literatures in the Ottoman Empire) (unpublished doctoral thesis, Bilkent University, 2011), p.121.} As people became the People in Western Europe, and as teaya became population in the Ottoman Empire, melodramas served to recreate the moral occult that was threatened due to such transformation. The approach to bodies in melodramas was also parallel to the transformation of bodies as biopolitics became the fundamental technology of modern power. As Peter Brooks contends, bodies in melodramas are “place[s] for the inscription of highly emotional messages that [could not] be written elsewhere, and [could not] be articulated verbally”.\footnote{Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p.xi.} Kerime Nadir's best-selling melodramas mark the first half of the twentieth century as the period of such transformation with heroes' transitioning from young boys to men. In Hıçkırık, once Kenan is a fully grown hero, coming back to Istanbul with the victorious troops of the Independence War, Nalan is too sick to unite with him. She is, consequently, replaced with a younger and healthier version of herself. Kenan as a new man can only be united with a new woman, Nalan's healthy and fit daughter, Handan. Handan, in other words, is the new generation who is capable of breeding a healthy new nation.

In Nadir's Posta Güvercini, on the other hand, the progress of the hero, İskender, is emphasised as a crisis of masculinity as he peeps through key holes, desires his uncle’s wife and rapes his childhood friend Ecmel. Ashis Nandy’s formulation of hypermasculinity functions as a useful term in order to scrutinize İskender’s on-going attempt at proving his manhood. His sexuality becomes aggressive and defensive in an attempt to hide his almost a man but not quite state, parallel changes in both Şahizer’s disease and economic policies of the transition period from the CHP rule to Democrat Party rule. While cancer of Posta Güvercini replaces consumption of Hıçkırık, the unbalanced economic growth of the bourgeoisie of the period is reflected through Nazım's thirst for money. The text positions Nazım’s greediness, İskender’s sexuality and Şahizer’s illness, all of which are untamed and invasive, parallel to one another, and demands the recreation of the moral occult. Both Hıçkırık and Posta Güvercini are in line with the nationalist, progression-centred and eugenicist agenda of the republic with heroines raising the new man of the nation. This
research, therefore, has shown that early republican melodramas not only align themselves with a Kemalist ideology, but also point to crises in hegemonic masculinity whose solution is found in the sacrificial nature of heroines. The medical discourse of the period informs these works with sickly heroines being replaced by their healthy and fit daughters or younger companions.

In the second half of the century, however, a modernist movement began to emerge dominantly in short stories and poetry, and later on in the novels. These works were not only critical of the state, but they also began to undermine the allegorical formulations of characters, problematizing the relationship between individuality and community. While in the early examples, existentialism played a crucial role in the emerging modernism, a gender-centred criticism directed at the role of women in society or in the nation-building project helped critical voices to emerge, especially in women writers’ works. Bodies played a crucial role in the emergence of such resistant voices, inevitably affecting the place of the body and the role of illness in these texts. Undermining the allegorical definitions of sacrificing, healthy and productive Kemalist woman identity, these works put bodies forward as the core of experience. In other words, in the second half of the century as individuality replaced community, bodies reclaimed their corporeality.

Regarding the so called 12 march novels, produced in the Cold War period, Çimen Günay Erkol notes that “To alleviate the despair of tyrannies, many writers turn to the realm of the corporeal, and attempt to restore dignity to the individuals via their material existence and bodily sensations”.\(^5\) The place of corporeality as a resistant device in the works produced during the coup d'états period undermine the ‘ideal woman’ identity and places the corporeal at the centre as a way to shatter the borders of fixed subjectivity. In these writers' works, the bodies of exception become gates of transformation and metamorphosis, opening the gate to various other excluded identities.

Tezer Özlü's Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri is, on the one hand, a Bildungsroman narrating the story of a protagonist who depicts various forms of oppression of institutions from family to school, marriage and mental institutions; on the other hand, it is a text that disrupts and undermines the linear progression of Bildungsroman by going against linear timelines and instead emphasizing sensual associations. The narrator resists the idea of

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maturing into a fixed subjectivity, and instead replaces this narrative with a never-ending process of becoming. Tactile experience, sexuality and childhood function as gateways to such constant becoming. The disruption of the linear progression through the use of a second narrative voice undermines what Bakhtin defines as “an image of man growing in national-historical time”. Instead Özlü adopts a counter-narrative which focalizes on the corporeal experience of the lived body. The narrator revolutionizes her skin, portrays her body as a desiring body and shatters the authoritarian institutions by opening her body to interaction, becoming and Affect.

Sevim Burak's “Afrika Dansı” takes a step further in attacking the authoritarian order both in its form as well as in its content: The lines lapse and crack, slash signs replace commas, words written in capital blocks attack linear and tamed lines. In Jale Parla's words, “the narrative itself joins the dance.” In its content, the story becomes a story about becoming minor with the narrator transforming herself from a patient at a hospital to a Nigerian dancer, to a woman entrapped by her husband. As the machine takes multiple forms of oppression, the narrator takes multiple forms of becoming minor. Her patient-hood gives way to a transformation and metamorphosis into multiple identities all of which have the power to disrupt any form of imposed order. In this work, patient-hood bestows the body with the power to resist the universal, totalitarian and majoritarian machine.

In Aslı Erdoğan's short stories, “Yitik Gözün Boşluğunda” and “Tahta Kuşlar”, sick or scarred bodies are portrayed with their potential of transforming protagonists’ subjectivities. As their present bodies fail to fulfil the demands of the everyday, characters are violently transformed into abjects. Such a state, however, helps them reclaim and rediscover their corporeal existence, feeling their bodies more so than ever before.

The variety of the primary sources of this project shows that there is still much to discuss regarding the relationship between literature and illness. Turkish literature not only provides the field of medical humanities with rich material, but it also offers insights into the relationship between postcolonial theory and medicine. Considering that social Darwinist policies were enacted in the Ottoman Empire within the Tanzimat period, the

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place of medicine in both Turkish modernization and in the novel form as a device of negotiation gains importance. Therefore, this project has shown that the formulation of bodies as healthy and productive is intrinsic to the nation-building project and affects the ways in which members of the nation position themselves in society to this date. Being included in the borders of nation through exclusion, the sick bodies, on the other hand, either point to what constitutes a threat to the borders, or reclaim the threat and turn revolutionary.

The relationship between the state and women’s bodies, especially in relation to their health, remains tricky to this date. In 2008 the prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded women to produce ‘at least three children to keep the numbers of our young population high’. In 2013, he referred to birth control methods as “murder” and warned women against the dangers of choosing to give birth by caesarean sections. Remarks such as these once again framed women as the guarantors of future generations, disregarded their individualities, and gave them biological responsibilities. Such a discourse also, once again, recreates an image of an ideal woman who is not only willing but also capable of producing ‘at least three children’. In other words, the inclusive exclusion of unhealthy bodies remains in full force. Considering that government officials did not refrain from calling protestors of Gezi Park ‘vermin’, it is clear that the medical discourse continues to function as a tool of power. Inevitably, as the official ideology continues to regulate bodies through such discourse, literary works will keep on writing back to shatter the borders of ideal bodies.

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