Cold War masculinities in Turkish literature: A survey of March 12 novels

Günay-Erkol, C.

Conclusion

Turkish literature of the 1970s reflects a strong contribution of writers who explore struggles of the individuals with fragmented identities. Not only the March 12 novels, but also others published in the ten year period between 1970 and 1980 play a conspicuous role in the exploration of identity and its fluxes. As the Table A.1 on page 303 shows, March 12 novels form only a limited part of a vast body of literature. Many other novels listed in this table are imbued with the conflicts of the period as well, although they take a relatively distant approach to the history and memories of the military intervention, and the influence of this particular chapter of Turkish history in the cultural climate of the country. The period of upheaval in Turkey's political and cultural life during the 1970s was fictionalized in many different forms, and produced novels reflecting an awareness of those who were subjected to despotism, and abuse of justice. The writing of the period was heavily informed by social conflicts, but there were individuals with their own narrative projects as well: Oğuz Atay's tales of disconnectedness, Yusuf Atılgan's stories of alienation, Orhan Kemal's and Erol Toy's working-class sagas, Yaşar Kemal's Anatolian magical realism, Kemal Tahir's historiographical novels and, of course, women authors' work such as Leyla Erbil's exploration of women who resist being defenseless objects of male desire were also important pillars of the literature of the seventies. Few writers who published during this period are still productive today. Many of them disappeared from the literary

scene: some became blacklisted, while the names of others waned as time passed.

March 12 novels also faded away. They are not as popular as they once were. The youth of the 1970s, engaged in changing the world, today symbolizes a worn-out orthodoxy for many people. However, it is equally hard not to see that what happened on March 12 is still a crucial part of Turkey's present. It is a constant discussion in Turkey whether military interventions are necessary mechanisms for a stable, secular, and democratic Turkey or if the military's super-ego function does nothing but keep Turkey in a borderline disorder, which makes the country loose the control of her ego, fail to face her demons, and decide for herself on her own. This makes the history of military interventions a particularly useful subject to understand the cultural and political dynamics of the country, and it also makes paying attention to March 12 novels worthwhile. The putatively canonical body of March 12 novels is not a collection of stories of a few individuals alone, but of people, life, and a dark period of Turkish history. These novels take readers skillfully, and very intimately, into life in Turkey of the 1970s. Against the background of a revolutionary uprising and the conservative reaction it encountered, a whole society is presented through the ideas and actions of individuals. It is important to see that individuals do not, for the most part, become lost in this collectivity. They are given dimensions of development and growth, and portrayed with their sufferings, and ups and downs in life. Beneath the political burden, there is an arresting questioning of individuality in March 12 novels.

March 12 novels occupy a distinguished place in the history of contemporary fiction of Turkey because of their pioneering role in implementing eyewitness testimonies into literature. This aspect of the corpus cannot be denied or downgraded. Without the terror and memories of the events surrounding March 12, these novels would not be the same because the foundations of the significant realism of the texts are laid by the history of March 12. Although both the historical frame of reference and the internal time frame of most of the March 12 novels are littered with the events of the 1970s in Turkey, the March 12 novel is not simply a fallout from the military intervention. March 12 is definitely a vehicle that opens and closes the stories of the novels, but March 12 novels are also important in what they discuss in the meantime. Their look at the cultural transformations of the 1970s with a specific interest in the realms of gender is also new and innovative.

Gender has been a central issue for novelists ever since the novel was imported

from Europe to the Ottoman Empire as a new genre in the nineteenth century, but the eroticization of power and the sexual energy around which political and national identities are constructed were hardly discussed in explicit discourses until the emergence of March 12 as a distinct literary movement. Until the March 12 novels, there was hardly any collaborative effort to see gender clearly, without degrading sexuality to a footnote of the wider struggles or a by-product of something else. Themes such as puberty, homosexuality, necrophilia etc. rarely survived the self-censorship mechanism of writers who spent considerable time calculating the unpredictably disabling consequences of mentioning such themes, until the liberal aura of the 1970s. March 12 novels constructed a new narrative world, in which gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and ideology inform one another within and beyond a psychological perspective.

Previous arguments about the March 12 novel suffer from selective use of the novels published during the March 12 epoch. The multiplicity of the corpus has been denied in critical studies since the 1970s, because of the canonization of the literary accounts of March 12 in a manner privileging the left-wing realist novels. The gesture of outreach and expansionism proposed by this dissertation's call for opening the previously established canon of March 12 novels may seem problematic to those who were victim of abusive power as members of the revolutionary left. However, my call for opening the canon of March 12 novels is not an attempt to credit the fascist prerogatives. It is rather a call to have a complete picture of the object of study, before working on individual novels in detail. In giving space to right-wing novels, I have by no means let go the option to criticize the dark view of their "nationalism" and "guardianship" politically. It is impossible to ignore the fact that leftist writers mostly managed to sustain moral distance from the revolutionaries they created, and took a critical stance at their ferocity, while rightists were by no means critical of the right-wing violence. Pulling "other" novels into the picture (by "other" novels, I refer to allegorical novels that deal with abuse of power without real time references and novels that were written by the right-wing) makes it clear that the term "March 12 novel," symbolizes a mixture of different narrative strategies and political ideologies. Opening the canon makes us understand that March 12 novels have utterly been eclipsed by the infamous political polarization and escalating revenge between the rival groups in the specific settings of the 1970s.

In tones ranging from soulful to provocative, and from didactic to whimsical,

the nine novels that constitute the explicit object of study of this dissertation draw a stunning picture of the March 12 period. Some of them plead, while some others shock. In one way or another, they are political novels, which chose to comment on a specific set of realities and conceal or ignore the others. There is legitimate sociopolitical criticism in the March 12 novels. They convincingly capture the soul of a country under political violence and oppressive military rule, and paint a vivid and nuanced portrait of radicals and reactionaries tussling over political issues. Some novels reduce complicated conflicts to simple duels with a Manichean look at the events of March 12, while others avowedly confess the incommensurability of all the perspectives available to the people of 1970s Turkey. The crucial point in analyzing these novels is that, the they have different ideological sympathies and are differently positioned toward the events of March 12. What is remarkable about them, is that they make readers confront the questions produced by the historic events of March 12 and also push them toward a self-questioning about power and authority.

The novels' portrayal of the political struggles of the period, however, raises questions beyond those struggles, because they probe us on many levels. March 12 novels are concerned with different questions within the framework of their politically aware historicism: What is power? Why do people abuse it? What are the responsibilities of the strong toward the weak? What makes a man powerful? How can a man obtain power and protect it? Does masculinity automatically bring destructiveness? There are also questions posed by taking women's attachments to power: Are women, by definition, powerless? Do men have a monopoly on power? How do women gain power and what should they do to protect it? The novels further ask: How are power and masculinity tied together? How are hierarchies of class and status built around masculinity? Are these hierarchies static or in flux? These are not simple or easily answered questions. They are tied to all the philosophical, cultural, and political systems that preoccupy our contemporary world.

In a period defined by the political boasting of the military, when mass media were censored and selective in the content and quality of their coverage, March 12 novels were also, to some extent, doing media work. They were call-outs to people to open their eyes to the "truth." Some writers of March 12 may be said to find the most formidable means of criticism in novel. But novels should be read as novels. The caliber of a fictive work obviously cannot depend on the

extent to which it "correctly" refers to reality. I understand that to fend off fascist initiatives during the upheavals of the 1970s, priority was given to keeping political solidarity alive, which made, for the time, many different features of the March 12 novels uninteresting to literary critics. In the havoc, it was hard not to use the lens of politics as the primary means of approaching literature, which explains the accumulation of critics around Marxist terminology and their insistence on reading March 12 novels as texts that are inescapably subject to a question of truth.

Reading March 12 novels with an attempt to find how much of them represent the truth, however, misses several important features of these novels. It misses how these novels inscribe hierarchies of otherness, negotiate power, appeal for liberties and alternatives, discuss what love for the people and country means, and question the role of the modern individual in modern collectivities. The individual in March 12 novels is the very site of trauma, and the locus of power and collectivity at the same time. What previous interpretations fail to grasp is that a critique of gender identity, in particular masculine identity, is present at the heart of the March 12 novels' view of the individual. Several critics and scholars of Turkish literature have noted, in broad terms, that the March 12 literature, chronicled the sufferings of victimized selves. But hardly anyone paid attention to the gender trouble that lies beneath the victimization at stake. Such a critical perspective was unsettling in the 1970s, when any interest outside *économie politique* was considered an implicit critique of Marxism. This set of values has left gender aside as a feature that does not offer an analytically critical position in the examination of literary texts. The politically polarized literary criticism of the 1970s has preferred to omit references to the March 12 novel's inner dynamics and anxieties, and rather focused on the accuracy of the writer's view of the events.

Peter Brooks, in *Reading for Plot*, indicates that his "dissatisfaction with the various formalisms that have dominated critical thinking about narrative" put him in engagement with the role of desire in narrative.[63] Similar dissatisfaction with the formalisms imposed on the approaches to the March 12 novel placed me in an attempt to revisit those texts with a different agenda. There is no doubt that these texts cannot be separated from their political context, but March 12 novels put a major question mark on the previous criticisms of them, because they

[63]Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 47.

do not fit into the picture put forward by critics. These novels can be characterized as class-conscious, political and historiographical fictions indeed, but it is important to see that they are precisely not hamstrung by either the "truths" of class, or those of politics and history. Looking at March 12 novels from the fringes of the established position that has evaluated them as politically motivated reflections of a dark period in Turkish history, gives us a chance to see their intricately woven inner structures. Those structures do not bring text and history together in a singular and monolithic way. Instead, there is a vindication and challenge at the same time, of history and of historically and culturally determined archetypes and definitions. The modern bourgeois idea of "the individual" is discussed next to the Marxist model of base-superstructure, and the existential idea of reaching to a deeper level of meaning about life. To alleviate the despair of tyrannies, many writers turn to the realm of the corporal, and attempt to restore dignity to the individuals through their material existence and bodily sensations. This liberationist discourse both situates individuals as a byproduct of historical accents of oppression and resistance, and also sees them as loci for power.

Once this complexity is recognized, it also becomes easy to understand March 12 novels' influence on readers. Ideas about self, subjectivity, ideology etc. in March 12 novels do not merely reflect the historical and cultural circumstances from which they emerge, but also they influence them by destabilizing positions imposed on people by the historical, cultural, and political structures. The narratives possess contrasting truths and modes of thought, and they use them in a process of understanding the heterogeneous historical, cultural, and political reality of March 12 and raising people's consciousness about it. There is a discussion in March 12 novels, of what people of rival political engagements, different generations, and varying classes should expect of one another, and also a projection of this vague discussion of democracy to the relationship between state and individuals, who happen to be citizens of a country reigned by a patriarchal, authoritarian and persecutory culture in the specific settings of March 12. These novels shape new models of subjectivity, paving the way for the recognition of narratives as a productive force capable of producing alternative power relationships.

Suspended in the historical throes of the *coup d'état*, these novels provide glimpses of a fractured, divided self, a much developed version of the one diagnosed in the first Ottoman-Turkish novels in men of two minds, between established traditions and an unfamiliar "modern" way of life. In "Conjectures on

World Literature," Franco Moretti underlines the importance of this dilemma as a productive realm for the literature of the period, quoting Jale Parla's evaluation of the Tanzimat novels. Parla says that "behind the inclination towards renovation, stood a dominant and dominating Ottoman ideology that recast the new ideas into a mould fit for the Ottoman society. The mould, however, was supposed to hold two different epistemologies that rested on irreconcilable axioms. It was inevitable that this mould would crack and literature, in one way or another, reflects the cracks."[64] A projection of this encounter to the specific settings of the March 12, clarifies the problem as an anxiety of fitting the liberating ideas that came with the spirit of 1968 into the Turkish society, and it was inevitable for the March 12 novel too, indeed, to reflect the anxieties of change.

March 12 novels reveal this tension and concentrate on the border between "being oneself" and something else. They span the entire social hierarchy from the high and upper-middle class bourgeoisie to the child workers who settle at the very bottom. The scale of their lenses extends from the intimate links between nuclear families, lovers, "comrades," and "greywolves," to a panoramic view of the networks of links in a collection of diverse people. Their dramatic themes range from the position of the individual in society against an oppressive state power, to the political, social, and moral responsibility of individuals and their desperate need for recognition. The "red scare," the student uprisings, the increase of ethnic tension, and gender tension function as plot lines of the texts, and they immerse the reader in questions about individuality. March 12 novels contain life stories that give rich evidence of the friction between the forces of the personal and the impersonal, and appear as vibrant and exciting catalogues of masculinities. These aspects of the March 12 novels did not figure prominently in their reception in Turkey.

March 12 novels provide a challenge to the predominantly traditionalist culture of Turkey, which had failed to recognize the plight of the broken-down man as anything other than cowardice. My interest in these texts focused on how the literary imagination has responded to and was shaped by masculinities offered by the time. It is only by infusing a gender-conscious analysis into the very heart of looking at the March 12 novels that a comprehensive "New Historicist" approach could best be established. This study has argued that gender is the overlooked center of gravity of March 12 novels. March 12 novels question pre-existing notions

[64]Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature.", *New Left Review* 1 (2000), p. 62.

of masculinity under the historical burden that politicizes gender relations. The incendiary rhetoric of previous readings of March 12 novels underestimate their stake in gender. Closer examination shows that March 12 novels are a complex mixture of sexual-social-political critique with a testimonial historiography of the events surrounding March 12, 1971. Writers of March 12 novels use discourses of masculinity as a powerful means to represent a range of forms of power and oppression, in imagining the intricate and vividly rendered social world of their novels.

As a general remark, it can be said that the representations of masculinity in the novels are not monolithic but fluid, diverse and fraught with ambiguity. Evocation of manliness is largely anxious: masculinity is revived in the face of traumatic memories, of street clashes, torture, and incarceration, which symbolically constitute an abridged account of March 12. What we have in March 12 novels is an image of manhood that is unquestionably impaired, and there is a sinister rhetoric of gender under the impairment. Of the nine novels central to this study, it is Çetin Altan's *Büyük Gözaltı* that most simply links the patriarchal "law of the father" to the oppressive "law of the state." Based on a mechanism of remembrance moving back and forth in time, *Büyük Gözaltı* illustrates a young boy's growth into adulthood in a story intertwined with the story of a theatrical custody experienced for political causes, in his adulthood. This novel draws attention to the efforts of cultural "policing" inherent in social structures and institutions such as the family, the school, and the state. Prison is another institution that becomes part of the story, adding the specific shade of March 12, and bringing the issue of political persecution to the fore.

The theme of political persecution is elaborated upon more comprehensively in Erdal Öz's *Yaralısın* and Melih Cevdet Anday's *İsa'nın Güncesi*, both of which revolve around the problem of victimization as a spectacle, a public exhibition in which the persecuted constitute a direct warning example. With a brisk narrative style, Öz's novel illustrates a torture survivor trying to overcome his trauma. *Yaralısın* extends the war for power between the military and civilians to the struggle between all civil but power-hungry masculinities. *İsa'nın Güncesi* deals with brutality and torture allegorically, combining surrealism with a suspenseful noir and psychological insecurity. These novels place manhood under pressure and transform it. There are two contrasting masculinities in the novels, which relativize the state of being a man. With the complementary appearances of sec-

ondary characters, all three narratives raise a discussion of the problematic border between hyper-masculinity and hypo-masculinity. An arresting exploration of the human psyche and masculine virtues also accompany this discussion.

Büyük Gözaltı, *Yaralısın*, and *İsa'nın Güncesi* negotiate the potential of masquerades to challenge political and social reality. Their emphasis is not, as previous critics have suggested, in the heroes who grow larger in their violent encounter with oppression, but rather in the "feminization" of men under pressure and their struggle to deal with this situation. They critically deal with the terror of being crushed and rendered impotent by the more powerful, and illustrate how it becomes clear throughout the resolution of this fear that masculinity consists of essentially conditioned reflexes. What typifies most masculinity in these texts is the defensiveness taken in response to vulnerability. Enduring fear and pain are defined as proper masculine values, and the protagonists attempt to avoid gender insecurity by masquerades of masculinity when they feel weak. The protagonists show an unlikely willingness to discuss their unmanly lack of power. In this discussion, they implicitly suggest an alternative masculinity guided by intellect rather than muscle power which, alluding to the drama of the March 12 coup, symbolically stands for the cogent fight of the intelligentsia with the militaristic way of solving problems.

Men, regardless of their political orientation, obtain masculinity through engagement with some roles of "toughness." Such a role is neither particular to the period, nor confined to Turkey. However, in these initial examples of March 12 novels, it is closely connected to the heightened atmosphere of political clashes, and the oppressiveness of the military coup. "Toughness" and its alternative "intellect" settle into a complex superiority/inferiority framework in the novels. Men supportive of violence, who engage in destructive acts, are not hurt but the hesitation of the male characters to adopt the traditional role of "macho man" demonstrates that it is an inferior masculinity when compared to the masculinity that tries to solve problems with intellect. So intellectual men hesitate to embrace excessive destructive concerns while responding to the institutions that oppressed them, such as the police or the education system.

Women writers engage with this duality in a more detailed manner. They indeed mine through the historical-political narrative of March 12 and reach deeper levels in their search for the roots of the hunger for power. They desacralize

the victim position and explore the "macho" hidden in the male "victim." Sevgi Soysal's *Şafak*, deals with police brutality in its simple reality and also sheds a critical eye on the potentially destructive and disabling side of the feudal culture, in the settings of the martial law period. Similar to Sevgi Soysal's exploration of human relationships as imprisoning power hierarchies in *Şafak*, Pınar Kür also critically engages with the abuse of power in her debut novel *Yarın Yarın*. Pınar Kür's *Yarın Yarın*, delves into the female appropriation of domination, oppression and pain, illustrating the illicit love affair between a bourgeois man who dedicates himself to revolution and an unhappy woman who lives within a stale marriage contract. Both novels emphasize that the image of "the victimized revolutionary" may be a cover for a masculinity that pushes women into secondary positions. They explore how women must adopt traditionally male roles and struggle in denying their own desires for the sake of their ideological attachments. *Şafak* and *Yarın Yarın* challenge the association of women with the private sphere of home and family, and the association of men with the public sphere of politics. With a feminist perspective with Marxist overtones, they turn to bourgeois morality, patriarchal traditions, and the socio-economic structures as the sources of sexual repression. They, however, also draw attention to the fact that oppression cannot be adequately apprehended either within March 12's dramatic military-civil dichotomy or within the conceptual limits of the Marxian theoretical framework.

The same traditional values, which *Şafak* and *Yarın Yarın* try to debunk, appear as valuables to be protected at the expense of loosing certain freedoms in the novels of the right-wing women writers. While *Şafak* and *Yarın Yarın* view the events of March 12 from a perspective sympathetic to revolutionary leftism, *Sancı* and *Zor* display patterns of affiliation to conservatism and nationalism, and a profound distaste for class-based politics. Equating the confusion in gender roles with decadence, *Sancı*, and *Zor* turn to the moral misery that comes with what they present as "revolutionism." Masculinities in these novels are simply divided into binary opposition: "the good" and "the beast." They ignore the history of right-wing extremism, which mounted a violent campaign of intimidation aimed at destabilizing the rise of the leftist insurgency, and sketch the atmosphere of March 12 as the sole result of left-wing violence. Emine Işınsu's *Sancı* argues that conventional femininity should be protected, since women in men's clothes bring nothing but pain to their lives. The novel deals with the escalation of political violence among young people, because of the powerful dedication of youngsters to

ideologies and comments on them sacrificing themselves for political causes around the story of a tomboyish young girl's being trapped in an illegal revolutionary group. Sevinç Çokum's *Zor* also evaluates girls in roles traditionally associated with boys as an assault on traditional culture and argues that pseudo-families on an ideological basis, can never be a remedy for the disintegration of family ties in modern times. Çokum emphasizes the clash of rural and urban cultures as the main trouble beneath the clashes of March 12. The novel clearly shows that a boy's experience of gender is constituted by the place he occupies within the intersection of provincial, class, and generational categories.

It is interesting to note that writers on the right seem to agree as well that capitalism is exploiting people. Both Emine Işınsu's *Sancı* and Sevinç Çokum's *Zor* show that capitalism reduces everything and everyone to exchange value. The novels portray poor working-class men of rural origin, whose families struggle with economic problems. They combine tyrannies of economic inequalities to gender and show the hierarchy between wealthy men and poor fellows, but do not elaborate on the gendered oppressions of patriarchy very much. Although they engage in a parallel critique of the limits of capitalism, right-wing writers hesitate to search beyond those limits. The notion of difficulty to break away from circumstances underlies both novels and the stories advocate staying within pre-assigned boundaries as a better solution. Emine Işınsu and Sevinç Çokum write in a moral panic about the way the "revolutionary left" is corrupting Turkish culture. They voice a call to protect the gender status quo, "the God-given order of nature," and to stop trying to fit women between the lines of male tradition. They deal with issues of female empowerment, but fail to explore the psychological reactions of women to the domination forced upon them.

In *Şafak*, *Yarın Yarın*, *Sancı*, and *Zor*, there are men who are representative of great ideas and principles, and men who are vulnerable individuals with all their anxieties and contradictions. Women settle between two powerful poles of politics. They serve as the arena wherein the ideologies meet and clash. All four novels contain the concept of hegemony in triangles. We find the protagonists, three women and one child worker, in an ideological whirlpool, captured between two conflicting powers, which provide the readers a contrastive focus on masculinity. Different masculinities linked to rival political ideologies court the protagonists, while their fierce fight terrorizes them. The protagonists try to bind their fate with one of the camps, and they also question the internal hierarchies and rules

of belonging. Sometimes we find the protagonist already tilted toward one wing, but still questioning his/her belonging. Sometimes, the protagonist is courted and pressured at the same time, and the narration is built on his/her indecision between the camps. The conflicting interests of the rivaling political wings, vividly depict the throes of March 12, and this tripartite game illustrates the burden placed on individuals by the upheavals.

These novels underline that patriarchal culture is organized into hierarchies. In their analyses of the geometries of patriarchy, *Şafak*, *Yarın Yarın*, *Sancı*, and *Zor* expose the devious political ends of imitating and performance. The narrations shed a critical eye on women, who try to fit themselves into masculine performances, and also on men, who try to adjust themselves to the norms displayed by the models they imitate, in order to gain a more favorable position in the power hierarchy. The novels abound with observations that the gendered power hierarchy benefits men the most. However, there is also an effort in the texts to underline that imitating hegemonic models of masculinity brings higher chances of upward mobility in the power pyramid. In the stories of *Şafak* and *Sancı*, masculinization of women in the leftist revolutionary movement appears as an important axis of the narration. In *Yarın Yarın* and *Zor*, a dark atmosphere of masculine anxieties prevails, and introduces disturbing questions about being "manly". Anxieties about complying with the standards of hegemonic masculinity strongly echo in the struggles of the male characters.

The last two novels analyzed in this study also circle around the anxieties of men. Tarık Buğra's *Gençliğim Eyvah* explores a young man's struggle for power, and tries to link the political aggression of the 1970s to a need for masculine affirmation. It discusses the credibility of an alternative masculinity at a time when a much different one was recognized as the norm. The search in *Gençliğim Eyvah* of the "true warrior" asks new questions about masculinity. Buğra introduces us to the working-class life of a young man, who torments himself asking if excessive concern for a woman is in itself emasculating. The narration also sheds a critical eye on the young man's love for his hero, his role model, and examines the ties of conformity that make him sacrifice his individual identity and become an obedient and passive man. Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Bir Düğün Gecesi* portrays the aftermath of the collapse of revolutionary utopias. It illustrates a wedding night where men and women of different classes meet and position themselves, even within the cozy atmosphere of the party, as subjects to be ordered by the military

figures attending the wedding. The father of the groom is a general whose masculinity defines the hierarchical chain of masculinities, in which men at the party try to find their respective positions. These novels provide a basis for rethinking the violent clashes of the period in terms of masculinity, because they evaluate the specific settings of March 12 as the crucible of masculinity. They critically explore men's group identity and expose how patterns of fraternities crisscross with a military ethos.

Gençliğim Eyvah and *Bir Düğün Gecesi* complement one another thematically, since both position March 12 on a historical and cultural continuum and relate it to the anxieties of modernization in Turkey. They recognize the centrality of masculinity in the cultural patterns which emerged in the course of Turkey's Westernization. They show how strongly the cultural production of masculinity is intertwined with an obsession with the definition of effeminacy, and in which ways this framework produces unstable images of male authority torn to pieces in the magnetism of ideologies. The debasement of the leftist youth and intellectuals, and their particular attempt to understand the reason for their being pushed to the peripheries of society has a central role in these two novels. *Gençliğim Eyvah* advocates for a genuinely Turkish masculinity, defining this identity with references to hard work, complicity with traditions, and being in total control. *Bir Düğün Gecesi* explicates these very premises to see how closely they match a militaristic ethos. The fragility of the male subject, as symbolized by the Bihruz bey of "the Bihruz bey syndrome," juxtaposes left leaning intellectual men with their more "manly" right-wing counterparts in the March 12 novel, and shows the close tie between cultural imperatives of masculinity and national prestige.[65]

March 12 novels question blind commitment to a specific ideology along some pre-assigned rules, and explore the confusion that revolves around "believing" and "knowing." They conduct an exploration of the forces that bind people into groups and, at the same time, deal with their protagonists' perception of moral and emotional dilemmas. In the stories of March 12 novels, the questioning of allegiance is not limited to what the state means and how loyalty to it should be defined, but it includes thinking about every kind of oppressive authority, whether social or cultural, that makes toys out of people. This brings with it a questioning

[65]Şerif Mardin, "Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century.", in *Turkey: Geographical and Social Perspectives.* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1974).

of the male appetite for battle, as well. Images of men afraid of pain, as illustrated in the March 12 novels, indicate that there is a psychological cost of learning to oppress and destroy. They show that men do not have an essential monopoly on traditional masculine virtues of toughness, aggression, and the willingness to use force, but they learn and imitate such roles. March 12 novels reveal men's hesitation while asserting the injustices of the victimization of the less powerful, but they do not offer solutions to the problem. By showing the ambivalences of men against embracing violence, however, they throw an important doubt upon the association of manhood with violence and femininity with gentleness.

The duality between hyper-masculinity and hypo-masculinity defines the key avenue that this dissertation traversed in its analysis of the fictionalization of men and masculinity in March 12 novels. In these works, different constructions of masculinities meet each other. Images of masculinity in March 12 novels tread an uneasy line between occupying subject and object positions. There is a narrative of duality and emasculation in all of the novels. At focus is an opposition (capitalist/socialist or greywolf/revolutionary or urban/rural), which serves as a manner to juxtapose a failed masculinity with the successful and acceptable one. The macho is not "the acceptable masculinity," but neither is the weakling. The dissonance between the community's expectations and protagonist's behavior politicizes the intricate issue of freedom in the novels. It brings to the fore questions about manners to resist oppressive powers that attempt to set limits to it.

Along this quest, the problem of acting "manly" surfaces as an important question. The protagonists seek to sustain the virtues of "toughness," despite the fact that their commanders/torturers seem to celebrate the very same quality. Their dilemma surfaces the cultural schizophrenia of referring to masculinity both as a domain of opposition and a domain of oppression: a man who oppresses is "manly," but a man who opposes this oppression powerfully is "manly" as well. March 12 novels indicate that gender may emerge as powerful and repressive at some times while, at other times, it unleashes possibilities of a heroic resistance. The shifts in the patriarchal ideology of 1970s Turkey produce unstable masculinities, which find themselves between the state of embracing an impaired masculinity and the state of asserting potency against oppressors. Characters are split into these two states of masculinity, and the novels address the problems, which beset the attempt to form a unified and stable masculine identity.

Working on novels written by men and women respectively has enabled me to interpret the same phenomena from different perspectives. Men's approach to masculinity provides a deep glimpse into the inner psychological reality of manhood, while women's approach expands the concept beyond the narrow cultural confines. Both re-enact the oppressive aspects of the masculinity of their times, and look critically at a normative and essentialist masculinity. Female writers tackle better with men's and women's collusion with power. The female guard Zafer in Sevgi Soysal's *Şafak*, the inauspicious Leyla in Emine Işınsu's *Sancı*, and the tomboyish Seyda in Pınar Kür's *Yarın Yarın* indicate that men cannot monopolize the hegemonic masculine ethos. Women writer's view of the period shows that they recognize the women's plight under ostensibly different yet fundamentally similar oppressive masculinities, and that they also identify women's crucial role in the foundation of such a culture. A recognition that associations of men grow more powerful only with the support of women echoes in this view. There is an interesting cleavage here, because woman are seen as decision-making individuals even in their passive role as conduits of male exchange. While women writers engage with women's tendency to power critically, and use specific female figures to comment on this issue, male writers do not descry the destructive masculine figures in their fiction individually at all. Most of them prefer to leave them anonymous. It is women writers, again, who identify power abuse: men such as the police officer Zekeriya and his sidekick Abdullah in Sevgi Soysal's *Şafak* or the general Hayrettin Özkan and Korea war veteran Ertürk in Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Bir Düğün Gecesi* provide the reader with resolute images of hunger for power.

In their assessment of the ways masculinities come into existence, the writers of March 12 clarify a culture of gender difference, in which both men and women play their exclusive roles. The novels move beyond the conventional concept of a single and uniform masculinity that associates privilege and power with "maleness" in an unproblematic way. Recognition of the existence of multiple masculinities, however, also surfaces some common denominators between them. A discussion of hegemonic norms of masculinity prevails in the novels and male subjects critically look at their accomplishments, to see if they fit into the category of hegemonic masculinity. There is a destabilization of categories of gender as a result of this self-inspection. The protagonists struggle with the cultural meanings inscribed to their gender. Their anxiety about being considered a "non-man" because of a lack of power and an inability to perform masculinity brings the question of

masquerade to the foreground.

I want to conclude with Roland Barthes' famous adage that "a little formalism turns one away from history, but a lot brings one back to it"[66]. Seeing gender as part of the picture in the analysis of March 12 novels, is like turning to history because of "a lot of formalism". Only with this turn does it become possible to see how historically and culturally constructed definitions of gender "naturalized" particular meanings of power and transformed our understanding of what it means to be a man and a woman. Gender is implicitly present within the seemingly-innocent definitions of cultural archetypes and it also influences how challenges to essentialist identity politics are figured out. March 12 novels introduce readers into a climactic episode where some men fail to be man enough, and some women push themselves into masculine performances. Oppressive figures of men and women complement the scenario, leaving the reader perplexed with the question of what counts as a representative characteristic of gender. Each of the novels explored in this study adds to the larger story of power and patriarchy in its particular fashion, and uses masculinity as a rhetorical device, a figure of speech for understanding social, political, and economic conflicts. In this dissertation, I tried to make a contribution to the study of March 12 fiction and to the newly developing field of masculinities in Turkey. It may be true that men and masculinity have been the implicit subjects of scholarly research and intellectual tradition for ages but, as long as these two concepts themselves do not become explicit subjects of analysis, it is hard to hope for a comprehensive critical analysis of a broad set of philosophical and political premises.

The military taking the political leadership of people into its own hands, and acting like an aggressive father, can be a common metaphor for numerous occasions of interventions worldwide. The idea of the state as a guardian watching over and chaperoning people is not limited either to the specific atmosphere of March 12 or to Turkey. There are writers all around the globe from nations that underwent military regimes or dictatorial periods and suffered under restricted civil liberties and human rights. Similarities such as an exhaustive questioning, a destabilization of mainstream values and beliefs, and a fascination with history and remembering can be found in many other examples. The distinctiveness of the March 12 novels, however, is that their stories are built upon the anxieties of a country, which was once a colonial Empire, and which turned her back on her his-

[66] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies.* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 112.

tory in the name of modernity. Turkey's relationship with her history exhibits a unique account of remembrance, because of this specific history of modernization and mixed feelings about looking back. There are other countries that experienced modernity as a mode of forgetting and Westernization as well. However, Turkey often seeks pride in the same history that she tries to forget because of the Ottoman golden ages, and this paradox, what Turkey's Nobel writer Orhan Pamuk calls the post-Ottoman melancholia, brings ambivalences to people's relationship with history[67].

The real eyewitnesses of March 12 are the people who lost their lives. As Primo Levi cogently states, "the survivors are not the true witnesses" because "the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance" are the ones who could not return to tell about their experiences or those who returned mute.[68] It is not possible to bring the dead back, but there is still hope that one day, the mute will begin speaking, not only about March 12, but also about the September 12 military intervention. While this dissertation was in development, several people who witnessed the upheavals of the 1970s put an end to their silence. In interview-books or autobiographies, they talked about their memories of the events in a detailed manner.[69] Memoirs of Nihat Erim, the president of the interim government of March 12, were decoded from tapes he had previously recorded and published in book form in 2007.[70] Previously classified documents related to US foreign policy regarding Turkey from 1969 to 1976 were recently made public by the authorities[71]. Some recent studies of oral history interested in witnesses of the events of 1970s began to broaden our knowledge about the upheavals of the period.[72] Very recently, documentary TV dramas that touch upon the 1970s such as "Çemberimde Gül Oya" and "Hatırla Sevgili" became very popular. These accounts promise to break the silence about the memories of March 12 and attract attention to a chapter in the country's history, which was ignored for a long time. They are little cracks in a longstanding wall,

[67] Orhan Pamuk, *İstanbul: Memories and the City.* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

[68] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved.* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), p. 83-84.

[69] Tuba Çandar, *Murat Belge: Bir Hayat.* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2007); Mine Söğüt, *Aşkın Sonu Cinayettir: Pınar Kür ile Hayat ve Edebiyat.* (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2004)

[70] Nihat Erim, *12 Mart Anıları.* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007).

[71] See "Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1969-1976" Foreign Relations of the United States. Vol. XXX. United States Government Printing Office Washington (2007). Also available online at http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/96610.pdf

[72] Serra Ciliv, "Between Belonging and Opposition: Life Story Narratives of Women from the Generation of '78.", Master's thesis, Sabancı University. (September 2002).

but the wall is made of glass and once it cracks, it will eventually shatter.